

**THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) IN IRELAND:
SECTARIANISM AND IDENTITY**

By

MARIA HELEN KENNEDY

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Department of Theology and Religion
College of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham
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Abstract

This thesis is a sociological study of Quakers in Ireland that investigates the impact that sectarianism has had on identity construction within the Religious Society of Friends. My research highlights the complex identities of individual Friends in respect of culture, national identities and theology – mirrored by the Society's corporate identity. Jennifer Todd's work on sectarianism and oppositional identities in Ireland provides part of the theoretical framework for this thesis.

An identity matrix formulated from interview data is used to illustrate how different identities overlap and relate to each other. I argue that the range of 'hybrid' or multi-layered identities within Irish Quakerism has resulted in tensions which impact on relationships between Friends and on the Society. The thesis discusses how Friends negotiate these 'hybrid' identities.

Irish Quakers prioritise 'relational unity' and have developed a distinctive approach to complex identity management. I contend that in their external relations 'Quaker' represents a meta-identity that is counter-cultural in its non-sectarianism, although this is more problematic within the organisation of Friends. Furthermore, by modelling an alternative, non-sectarian identity, Friends are building capacity for transformation from oppositional to more fluid and inclusive identities in Ireland.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved mum, Mary Anne Kennedy, whose affection, humour and Irishness I value dearly, and to the memory of my father, James Joseph Kennedy.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

1.1. Introduction

This thesis argues that sectarianism in Ireland has had a distinctive impact on the identity of Quakers.¹ As a consequence the Religious Society of Friends has developed an approach to the management of its complex and diverse identity which prioritises relationships between Quakers in order to maintain the unity of the organisation. Furthermore, the thesis suggests that 'Quakerism' could represent a meta-identity in the wider society which is counter-cultural in its non-sectarianism, thereby building capacity for more inclusive identities.

In order to develop the main arguments of the thesis outlined above this chapter begins by setting out the background (1.2) and context of the study (1.3). There is an introduction to the history, culture and theology of Quakerism (1.3) and Irish Quakers in particular (1.4). I consider specific issues about the use of language related to the political context of Ireland, introduce some key terms and definitions and outline my approach to 'balancing' the historical narrative about Irish sectarianism (1.5). This is followed by a review of the literature about Quakers in Ireland and an overview of the main theoretical perspectives about identity and then Irish identity and sectarianism (1.6). The chapter concludes with a summary of the main themes for subsequent chapters (1.7).

¹ Friend and Quaker are used interchangeably throughout the thesis.

1.2. Background

This study is about Quakers in Ireland, the development of sectarianism and the impact this had on the individual and corporate identity of the Religious Society of Friends. My work is primarily a sociological study, using qualitative research methods. Chapter three includes a historical narrative which contextualises the thesis in terms of the development of sectarianism and the impact on personal and communal identity. I draw on the work of Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg who define sectarianism in the Irish context as:

a system of attitudes, actions, beliefs and structures at personal, communal, and institutional levels which always involves religion, and typically involves a negative mixing of religion and politics which arises as a distorted expression of positive, human needs especially for belonging, identity and the free expression of difference and is expressed in destructive patterns of relating... (2001, 102-103).

As Thomas Tweed asserts religion enables followers to build a sense of home, delineate between the private and public sphere and formulate a collective identity. Religious affiliation also marks out those who are insiders and those who are on the outside of the group (Tweed 2006, 75). In the case of the 'religious' dimension of Irish sectarianism this awareness of group belonging has resulted in conflict and at times violence between the Catholic and Protestant communities which is explored in chapter three.

Sectarianism in the two Irish states has also had an impact on the identity of Friends. Findings from my fieldwork show that their identities are 'hybrid' and complex and that this is reflected in the cultural, political and theological spectrum of the Society. I assert that these diverse identities have resulted in tensions over key issues that

highlight different traditions within Ireland Yearly Meeting (IYM).² I examine two in particular – the ‘Troubles’ which broke out in the late 1960s and more recently responses to homosexuality and same sex relationships. Using case studies, I look at how individual Friends negotiate and transcend aspects of their identities in chapter five. At a corporate level, in chapter six, I explore how IYM prioritises what I term relational unity, in other words the focus is on avoiding hurt by not emphasising differences between Friends, and have developed a model of complex identity management in response to conflict resulting from the diverse identities of Friends. In chapter eight I argue that ‘Quaker’ functions as a meta-identity in certain situations in the two Irish states as a non-sectarian, counter-cultural alternative to oppositional cultural identities.

This research is original because a sociological study of Irish Quaker identity and conflict management has not been undertaken before. It adds to the literature about unity and complex identity management within worldwide Quakerism which also has a broad spectrum of theological and cultural perspectives. The research is important because it has major implications for the study of identity in groups and societies where there is conflict due to sectarianism or ‘oppositional’ identities. These forms of identity are the basis of much global conflict – it is important to understand their persistence and what is necessary to facilitate alternatives to violence. I argue that changes in political systems that tackle structural inequality do not in themselves undermine these forms of embedded identities. For example, at the time of writing up this thesis the Northern Ireland Assembly was on the verge of suspension, there are

² IYM is the name of both the national organisation of Quakers in Ireland and the annual gathering of Friends and will be used hereafter.

still 'peace walls' that divide communities and contention about parade routes³ is an ongoing issue.

1.3. Context of the thesis

1.3.1. Introduction to Quakerism – fundamental ideas of early Friends

The Religious Society of Friends emerged in England in the period following the English civil war. John Punshon states that they were one of the many radical Protestant nonconformist groups who believed that the Reformation did not go far enough in breaking with the religious practises and structures of Catholicism (1984, 9-10). Gerard Guiton outlines the social upheaval of the times in the aftermath of the war and widespread reaction against injustices inherent in English society such as rent increases and payment of tithes.⁴ According to Guiton, Quakerism emerged with the intention of bringing people the 'light' of spiritual solace (2005, 5). Furthermore, Guiton states that the centrality of theological concerns at the time were to do with growing dissatisfaction with the lingering influence of Catholicism on the Established Church (2005, 6).

Punshon dates the establishment of Quakerism as a religious group from 1652 when George Fox⁵ felt called by God to climb Pendle Hill in the Pennines and had a vision of a 'gathered people'. Fox travelled further north and began preaching his message rejecting traditional forms of worship and that people should listen to the 'inner light'

3 Section 1.5 explains why there is contention about parade routes.

4 Tithes were mandatory payments to local clergy and were a major source of discontent during the civil war period when many people stopped paying them. According to Barry Reay, Quakers were at the forefront of anti-tithing agitation and were particularly associated with this campaign (1980, 98-99).

5 George Fox (1624-1691) was the main founder of Quakerism (Dandelion 2008b, 2). He was one of a number of radical Christians in England who believed they were part of a movement to restore the 'True Church'.

of Christ's guidance (1984, 53-54). Fox attracted many who were 'convinced'⁶ by his teachings and also much opposition because of his criticism of traditional church services, structures and authority (Punshon 1984, 57). In the early period of Quakerism evangelists went on to take the Quaker message to other countries including Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany and some of the American colonies (Punshon 1984, 69).

Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins assert that 'Quakers were the most successful sect of republican rule' and that Quakerism can be viewed as radical in the sense that early Friends believed that everyone can have a direct spiritual experience with the Divine that does not have to be mediated by another; that this could be achieved more effectively in a Meeting for Worship based on silence. Quakers also believed in the equality of all so that everyone could 'minister'⁷ if called to do so (Dandelion and Collins 2008, 2). This principle had implications for the status of women and as well as preaching gave them opportunities for leadership roles and for providing pastoral care to other Friends. This came about when George Fox responded to the state persecution of Friends by strengthening and consolidating the structure of the Society including the creation of Women's Meetings (Punshon 1984, 85). Ideas about equality also extended to using forms of address which went against the conventions of the time related to a person's position in the social hierarchy (Dandelion and Collins 2008, 2).

6 Guiton states that 'convincement' was a form of spiritual baptism and opening up to God. Friends were expected to share their experience of being 'convinced' with others in their Meetings to deepen the spiritual growth of the community (2005, 47). The current use of the term refers to adults who become members of the Society 'by convincement' (Dandelion 2008b, 130).

7 Ministry is the personal testimony of Friends' experience of connection with God or 'the light' (Dandelion 1996, 16).

In the 1660s belief that the end times⁸ were imminent lessened and the focus moved to Quaker distinctiveness or 'peculiarities'. These included the drawing up of rules by the Society about dress and behaviour in everyday life. Endogamy⁹ was strictly enforced and many were 'disowned'¹⁰ if they married someone who was not a Quaker. Punshon links this aspect of Quaker discipline to a wish for separation from what were regarded as the evils of 'secular' society (1984, 62). The early eighteenth century onwards marked the 'Quietist' period of Quakerism with a removal of the Society from activism in the world and a focus on self-discipline and silent worship (Dandelion 1996, 9).

Bryan Wilson states that nineteenth century English Quakerism can be seen as a distinctive religious movement in which membership was largely conferred through being born into a Quaker family rather than through doctrinal or ritual admission (1967, 13). In contemporary times the majority of Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM)¹¹ are 'convinced'¹² and being born into a Quaker family does not automatically confer membership. However, the situation in Ireland is different and during my fieldwork I noticed a strong sense of awareness of who were 'birthright'¹³ Friends, even if some of these individuals stated that they were not in agreement with this status automatically conferring membership. As one respondent said 'I'm a 'birthright' Friend although I don't approve of 'birthright' membership'. The significance of the

8 End times – belief in various cataclysmic events including the second coming of Christ (Punshon 1984, 24-25)

9 Endogamy – where marriage is only permitted within the group (Dandelion 2008b, 131).

10 Disownment – the removal of formal membership of the Society (Dandelion 2008b, 130).

11 BYM is the name of both the national organisation of Quakers in Britain and the annual gathering of Friends and will be used hereafter.

12 The initial findings of the British Quaker survey concluded that 86 percent of Quakers are 'convinced' and 14 percent are 'birthright' Friends (Dandelion, 2013). I do not have the equivalent statistics for IYM.

13 A 'birthright' Quaker is someone who automatically becomes a member of the Religious Society of Friends if both of their parents are members (The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland 1971, 16). Those who identify with Quakerism but are not in membership are referred to as attenders.

background of 'birthright' and 'convinced' Friends is explored in various parts of the thesis in terms of the identity of IYM and conflict management.

By the mid-nineteenth century Dandelion and Collins observe that Quakerism was evangelical in tone, no longer saw itself as the true Church and had become part of the broader Christian tradition. In addition, by the end of the nineteenth century aspects of church discipline, for example, endogamy, modes of speech and dress were eased (2008, 2-3).

1.3.2. Theology and culture – twentieth century divergence

Elizabeth Duke identifies four main strands of worldwide Quakerism today; these are: Evangelical, Orthodox, Conservative and Liberal. My thesis focuses on two of these traditions – evangelical and liberal. Evangelical Friends are located in the USA, South and Central America, the Great Lakes region of Africa, some parts of Asia and Europe. Evangelical Meetings have pastors and programmed (structured) Meeting for Worship. Their theology is based on the premise that the path to salvation can be found through the 'acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Saviour, leading to newness of life' (Duke 2012a, 3). The statistics for 2005 showed that evangelical Friends comprised 40 percent of the total number of Friends throughout the world and liberal Friends 11 percent (Duke 2012a, 3). IYM has a unique position in world Quakerism because it includes both evangelical and liberal Quakers and is unprogrammed, meaning that Meetings for Worship follow the pattern of silence with ministry (Duke 2012a, 6). Irish Quaker theology will be explored in the next section and in chapter four of the thesis.

The Manchester Conference of Quakers in 1895 is generally acknowledged as marking the decline of evangelical Quakerism in BYM and the ascendancy of liberalism (Cantor 2001, 322). According to Dandelion and Collins:

...by 1900, Quakerism had been re-visioned by its younger adherents as part of liberal Christianity. It was also redesigned as again distinctively Quaker: Experience was primary. Liberal Friends did not want to return to the earlier days and they envisioned a Quakerism relevant to the age, open to new ideas, and one which held to the idea of progressive revelation, that God necessarily revealed more over time (2008, 3).

Dandelion outlines the different theological perspectives of liberal and evangelical Friends about the role of the scriptures and the 'inner light' (1996, 10). Liberal Friends were strongly influenced by Darwinism¹⁴ and turned to the ideas of early Quakers, re-establishing the notion of the 'inner light' and focus on individual discernment¹⁵ and experience. The Bible, although a source of inspiration, was not held to have authority by liberal Friends unlike evangelical Quakers (Dandelion 1996, 12).

In terms of organisational culture Wilson asserts that the structure of Quakerism is low-key and focused on providing the setting for direct communication with the spirit, there is an informal power structure, leadership positions rotate and there is no clergy (1967, 16-17). However, it can be argued that Wilson underestimates the impact of a significant aspect of Quaker theology on the organisational structure and culture of the Religious Society of Friends. It is not the case that there is no clergy – as Dandelion points out, George Fox declared that everyone could have a direct relationship with God without the need for the involvement of the clergy and that all

¹⁴ One of the speakers at the Manchester Conference was the physicist Silvanus Phillips. According to Geoffrey Cantor, 'he argued that modern science had brought new and valuable insights into the world, for example, the theory of evolution, that contemporary Quakers must fully engage [with]' (2001, 336).

¹⁵ 'Discernment: The process by which Quakers decide what is truly from God' (Dandelion 2008b, 130).

were ministers (1996, 16). This point has been reiterated in the following extract from the British Quaker anthology *Quaker Faith and Practice*:

When early Friends affirmed the priesthood of all believers it was seen as an abolition of the clergy; in fact it is an abolition of the laity. All members are members of the clergy and have the clergy's responsibility for the maintenance of the meeting as a community (2013, 11.01).¹⁶

This sharing of responsibility for community life has implications for the corporate culture of Quakerism. Dandelion argues that present day liberal Quakerism has become individualised and is no longer close to its Christian roots and there is a greater emphasis on social action than inward religiosity. Many liberal Quakers do not believe in God or they have dual allegiance with other faiths or Christian denominations (1996, 12). As Dandelion and Collins assert about the focus of liberal Friends on social activism:

This is, however, in accordance with a model that sees behaviour as the outward expression of an inner orientation to God, so what Friends do becomes their testimony of faith (2008, 9-10).

In contemporary times Friends refer to the testimonies of truth and integrity; justice, equality and community; simplicity and peace, and more recently earth and the environment as guidance for how to put their faith into action (Quakers in Britain). In discussing the historic association of Quakers with the peace testimony, Dandelion adds that:

Within the liberal tradition, the emphasis on experience allowed those with less-defined faith or clearly non-Christian ideas, but drawn by this testimony, to find a place within Quakerism (2008a, 67).

The testimonies have particular significance for Quakers in Ireland. Throughout the thesis I give examples of how different interpretations of the testimonies of peace and equality, in particular, caused contention within IYM. Dandelion's assertion that

¹⁶ A modified version of this extract is also included in the Irish Quaker anthology *Quaker Life and Practice: A Book of the Christian Experience of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland* (2012, 3.32).

contemporary British Quakerism is post-Christian (2008a, 22) is less applicable in the context of IYM. Many respondents observed that the culture of Irish Quakerism, even among liberal Friends, remains more Christo-centric than that of Britain Yearly Meeting, reflecting the continuing significance of religion in the two Irish states which is explored in chapter seven.

Dandelion argues that the unity of BYM is preserved through structure and form rather than belief. Dandelion examines what he terms the 'double-culture' around how belief and behaviour operate in BYM. Dandelion asserts that there is permissiveness in terms of belief alongside a conservative 'behavioural creed', so that belief is marginalised and what is more important is an agreed set of rules about behaviour within 'Quaker-time' (2008a, 22). The 'behavioural creed' refers to the norms of behaviour about, for example, how the Meeting for Worship begins and ends, and ministry. These norms tend to be enforced by elders who are responsible for discipline and nurturing the spiritual life of the Quaker community. Dandelion argues that while experience is primary and individual, unity is provided by the 'behavioural creed' (2008a, 22). Dandelion asserts that the use of silence by liberal Friends can be problematic in that:

...changes in individual and group belief remain hidden (silence masks reality) whilst the common form of worship presents a picture of unity (2008a, 33).

In her work about how newcomers to a non-doctrinal group are socialised so that unity is maintained, Caroline Plüss argues that:

The fact that novices are required to approve of the organization's worship practice before being admitted as members indicates that Friends' socialization activities focus on generating acceptance of this practice...The contradiction between diffuse collective definitions of belief and practice, and the fact that Friends require novices to approve of worship practice before

they can be admitted as members suggests that socialization activities are likely to be highly individualized (2007, 261).

Plüss points to ways that Quakerism aims to defuse conflict between Friends when contentious issues arise including the reminder: 'not [to] seek the will of men, but the will of God' (2007, 265). This approach is most evident in the Quaker business method. Quakers do not vote or attempt to reach a consensus instead they claim to 'discern' the will of God or the spirit. When the clerk of the Meeting discerns that enough contributions have been heard she or he will read out a minute which is tested against the collective discernment of Friends. Once the minute is agreed it is expected that Friends will unite behind whatever decision is made. Unity does not mean that everyone is in agreement with the decision, rather that they support it (Dandelion 2008b, 52-53).

In Susan Robson's work about how conflict is handled in BYM, Robson is overtly critical of what she regards as conflict avoidance within the organisation, as the following quote illustrates:

This study shows the obverse of the espoused theory that Quakers should mend the world and live in a peaceable kingdom without conflict. It shows that Quakers avert their minds from their own conflicts, which do exist. When this proves impossible they are uncertain and unskilled in handling them. This is the position from which they encourage the rest of the world to resolve its conflicts (2005, 231).

Robson also contrasts how conflict is managed by British and Irish Quakers and highlights what she considers is the inadequate approach of BYM compared to IYM (2008, 155). The theme of how conflict is managed within Irish Quakerism in terms of the complex identity of Friends is explored more fully in chapter six. There is also a broader discussion of conflict within Quakerism and other social groups in chapter seven.

1.4. Quakers in Ireland – history, culture and theology

This section is a brief introduction to Quakerism in Ireland, the impact of sectarianism on the positioning and culture of the Society, and Irish Quaker theology. These themes will be fully explored throughout the thesis.

According to Maurice Wigham, Ireland was in turmoil in the 1650s when Quakers first settled in the country due to the impact of the English civil war in Ireland and the policies of Oliver Cromwell in dealing with the many uprisings and rebellions during this period (1992, 16). Quakers were persecuted both as Dissenters and because they refused to conform to certain conventions of the time (Kilroy 1994, 83). Friends facing hardships were supported by the Society and a strict system of discipline was imposed to preserve the separation of Quakers from other Dissenters and the Protestant Ascendancy (Wigham 1992, 26). After the partial lifting of the penal laws in the mid-eighteenth century, which had placed wide-ranging restrictions on the participation of Catholics and Dissenters in the political and economic sphere, Quakers became wealthy merchants, founded their own businesses and banks and were in the professions. However, their refusal to pay tithes continued to impact on Irish Friends (Vann and Eversley 1992, 48-49).

Wigham asserts that Friends responded to periods of serious political and social unrest by trying to remain neutral, offering help and assistance to both sides where they could, and by not participating in armed conflicts because of the importance of the peace testimony and vulnerability as members of a very small group of nonconformists (1992, 29-30). As will be argued in the thesis, sectarianism had a distinctive impact on Irish Quakerism. The way that Friends navigated and

accommodated these forces is a continuous thread through to the present time and forms a central theme of the study.

Friends made an important contribution to relief efforts during the 'Great Famine' of the 1840s and there were many determined attempts to pressure the British government to reform the system of land tenure which eventually led a number of them to engage in parliamentary politics as Liberal MPs (Goodbody 1998, 32). This period also marked the consolidation of a trend towards theological divergence in the Society with many Friends, especially in Ulster, very influenced by the 'Evangelical Revival' that took place in Ireland and England during this time (Wigham 1992, 67).

Friends' attempts to remain apart from involvement in Irish Nationalism proved to be increasingly difficult during the Home Rule crisis of the 1870s onwards when it became evident that the majority were opposed to Home Rule and wanted to maintain the Union. Philip Ashton contends that, in general, Friends were not opposed to Catholic emancipation. They were concerned about the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in a more autonomous Ireland and some believed that sectarian divisions would intensify (2000, 17). There was a small, politically active group of Friends who were in favour of Home Rule and a smaller number of them went on to support the various Irish nationalist groups that emerged when the outbreak of the First World War delayed the implementation of Home Rule.

After the partition of Ireland in the early 1920s the Religious Society of Friends remained one organisation (Neill 1999, 13). However, the increasingly separate development of the two new political entities (the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland) also began to intensify the pre-existing political and theological differences

within the Society (Wigham 1992, 121-122). This meant that with the outbreak of the 'Troubles' in the late 1960s, although there were many examples of cross-community projects developed by Friends in Northern Ireland, it was observed by many respondents that it was problematic for the Society to comment publicly about civil rights issues such as the unequal position of Catholics in the Northern Irish state. Respondents also mentioned that the 'Troubles' were not discussed at Yearly Meetings, and that separate meetings were arranged for Friends who wanted to talk about the political dimension of the conflict.

In terms of Irish Quaker theology, IYM contains Friends from both liberal and evangelical traditions. I explore this theme with reference to the table developed by Dandelion outlining the different perspectives of Evangelical, Conservative and Liberal Friends (2008b, 108-109). In the amended table 1.1 (Dandelion 2008b, 108-109) the details about Conservative theology have been removed and I have added a column comparing the general perspectives of liberal and evangelical Quakers with those of Quakers in Ireland.

Evangelical	Liberal	Irish Quaker
Scripture and spiritual experience as primary	Experience as primary	Scripture and experience equally primary
Defined by belief	Defined in terms of method/form	Defined by belief and form
Christian identity primary	'Quaker' identity primary	Christian and 'Quaker' identity equally primary
Christian	Christian, post-Christian, and non-theist	Christian and non-theist
Realism	Semi-realism and non-realism	Realism and semi-realism
Final and complete and whole Truth possible. Theology as True, not just story.	Truth only personal, partial, or provisional. Theology always a 'towards' kind of activity. The 'absolute perhaps'.	Final and complete and whole Truth possible. Theology as True, not just story. Truth only personal, partial, or provisional.
Programmed or semi-programmed worship	Unprogrammed worship	Unprogrammed worship and semi-programmed worship
Pastors – visible and active	No visible leadership	Leadership role taken on by 'weighty' Friends to manage complex identity
Restraint of emotion variable church by church	Restraint of emotion	Restraint of emotion variable Meeting by Meeting
Mission Christianity seen as salvific	Outreach Quakerism seen as optional	Limited outreach
Traditional teaching on sexual morality	Politically liberal on sexual morality	Mix of traditional and liberal teaching on sexual morality
Inclusive	Exclusive?	Inclusive? - complicated by spectrum of theological outlook.

Table 1.1 Areas of difference between Evangelical, Conservative and Liberal Friends

The differences between the strands of Quakerism in the first two columns in table 1.1 and Irish Quaker theology reflect the spectrum of belief within IYM, different forms of worship, leadership roles and the identities of Friends. For example, as will be explored in chapter six, there are different teachings about sexual morality that have to be accommodated within IYM. The outward form of Irish Quakerism is primarily liberal in the sense that worship is generally unprogrammed and there are no

pastors. Although, as I go on to argue in chapter eight, there are a number of 'behavioural creeds' that correspond to the theological culture of different Quaker Meetings in Ireland. The final aspect of difference is concerned with what Dandelion argues is the inclusivity of evangelical Friends and exclusivity of liberal Quakerism. Dandelion asserts that:

Evangelical Quakerism is ultimately more inclusive. It both seeks and welcomes everyone, even when that inclusivity has meant leaving behind aspects of Quaker tradition. Conservative and Liberal Quakerism, with Quaker identity as primary, tends to be more exclusive, welcoming those for whom Quakerism is the right path, but placing little effort on mission (2008b, 112).

In ways that will be explored throughout the thesis, I argue that the issue of the inclusivity of Irish Quakerism is highly complex and linked to how the different theological and cultural traditions of the Society are managed. In addition, as I suggest in chapter eight, certain strands of Quakerism occupy a 'third way' between Protestant and Catholic sectarianism in Ireland and can be inclusive of both these traditions, although within the Society accommodation of these different strands has been more problematic.

1.5. Terminology, language and historical 'balance'

This section begins by exploring the use of language as a cultural and political marker in Ireland, defines the meaning of some of the key terms used in the thesis, and then goes on to discuss the issue of 'balance' in accounting for the development of sectarianism in Ireland.

The subject of politically 'loaded' language is part of the context for understanding Irish Quakerism because like other people in the two Irish states, Friends also make choices about how to express certain concepts and identity categories. One example

is the decision whether to describe someone as 'Catholic' or 'Roman Catholic'.

According to Martin Melaugh and Brendan Lynn:

The term 'Roman Catholic' is used frequently in Northern Ireland but more so by members of the Protestant community. Some Catholics are uneasy with the term 'Roman Catholic' as it implies a subservience which does not take account of the historically unique character of the Catholic Church in Ireland (2005).

In general I found that respondents from different traditions mainly used the term

Catholic rather than Roman Catholic. Those who referred to someone as Roman

Catholic were usually from a Catholic background themselves and also mentioned

Irish Catholicism, distinguishing between the different cultures of Catholicism.

Members of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland who support a reunification

of Ireland are referred to as 'nationalists'.¹⁷ 'Republicans' have the same aim as

nationalists but a number of them subscribe to the view that the use of force is a

legitimate strategy to achieve their goals (McCartney 1999, 13). Respondents in my

study who described themselves as republican stressed that Republicanism was on

a spectrum and positioned themselves as constitutional republicans. This indicates

the sensitivities for Quakers of the association of Republicanism with the use of

violence which is explored in the thesis. Jennifer Todd suggests that the political

opportunities for republicans brought about by the Good Friday Agreement of 1998

have come 'at the cost of cognitive dissonance', in the sense that their identity was

primarily shaped as a response to British colonialism. Republicans actively

participating in the Northern Ireland Assembly have had to come to terms with the

new political reality of power sharing arrangements with unionists (Todd 2010, 24).

¹⁷ Lower case is used when referring to members of the nationalist/republican and unionist/loyalist communities, Upper case is used for political parties or movements etc.

‘Unionists’ are members of the Protestant community who support the Union with the United Kingdom, as are ‘loyalists’. The latter are associated with paramilitary groups and the use of force to preserve the Union (McCartney 1999, 13). Both unionists and loyalists see their primary national identity as British and many of them are descendants of English and Scottish Protestants who settled in Ireland during the Plantation era from the early seventeenth century onwards, mainly but not exclusively in the north-east corner of the Island (McCartney 1999, 13). According to McCartney, not all Catholics and Protestants fit neatly into the categories outlined above and some have rejected the automatic association between their religion and a particular political affiliation (1999, 13). Some Catholics are unionists and have positive feelings about being part of the United Kingdom, mainly because of the introduction of the welfare state after the Second World War and the more liberal social policies in Northern Ireland compared to the Republic of Ireland. A smaller number of Protestants are nationalists and favour a united Ireland¹⁸ (Liechty and Clegg 2001, 33, McCartney 1999, 13).

Depending on an individual's cultural identity, Northern Ireland could be referred to as ‘Ulster’ and the ‘Province’ (the six counties of Northern Ireland are in the province of Ulster). These are terms used by some unionists and loyalists that are generally unacceptable to nationalists and republicans. The ‘six counties’ and the ‘north of Ireland’ are expressions commonly used by nationalists and republicans which are unacceptable to those in the unionist community because, for example, the term ‘north of Ireland’ places emphasis on the geographical location of that part of Ireland, rejection of partition and an aspiration for a united Ireland (Melaugh and Lynn 2005).

¹⁸ In the past many prominent nationalist leaders were Protestant, for example, Theobald Wolfe Tone, who was one of the leaders of the United Irishmen and fought alongside Catholics to bring about an independent Irish parliament in the unsuccessful 1798 Rising (Frayling 1996, 144).

Respondents also reflected these nuances of language in the way they referred to 'northern' and 'southern' Friends and the 'north and south of Ireland'.

The significance of language and how it links with identity is also illustrated by the name the two communities give to the second major city, in the north west of Northern Ireland. Nationalists and republicans usually refer to it as Derry and members of the unionist and loyalist community call it Londonderry (Melaugh and Lynn 2005). In the 1980s it acquired the nickname 'Stroke City'¹⁹ and then more recently 'Legenderry'.²⁰ Respondents shared instances of how the use of, for example, Derry or Londonderry, caused tensions between Friends because this highlighted their different cultural and political backgrounds. In this thesis I also had to navigate these choices of language and terminology. In discussing the two Irish states I refer to the Republic of Ireland (or the Republic for short) and Northern Ireland because they are recognised political entities.

In this section I also argue that formulating a 'balanced' historical account involves making choices about what is to be included in the narrative and where the emphasis is placed in discussion of historical figures and events. This process is particularly challenging in situations of violent sectarian conflict where communities have different versions of their country's history. According to Liechty and Clegg, what matters is not the historically accurate 'facts' about what happened in the past but the meanings that individuals and communities give to these events in the present time

19 Gerry Anderson, a presenter on Radio Foyle, a local BBC radio station, described how he came to call his hometown 'Stroke City'. Anderson relates how in 1984 the ruling nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) changed the name of the city council from Londonderry to Derry. This angered unionists who continued using the name Londonderry. The BBC issued a directive to its presenters saying that Londonderry should be used when introducing the city and then Derry subsequently. Anderson decided to use the expression Derry stroke Londonderry. This was then shortened to 'Stroke City'. Anderson also recounted how people who were stopped at army checkpoints and asked where they were going to, could easily be identified as nationalists or unionists by how they answered and this tended to make nationalists a target for extra questioning by the Crown Forces (Anderson, 2000).

20 During a visit to Derry in 2012 I noticed that the buses from the airport had Legenderry written on the side of them. I asked about the significance of this and was told that it was to help reclaim the name of the city from sectarian overtones ahead of Derry-Londonderry being the City of Culture in 2013.

(2001, 64-65). John Tosh and Sean Lang refer to the development of a community's collective memory, experience and sense of identity; they argue that in Northern Ireland there is a fragmentation of this memory due to different claims about the past and the way that significance is attached to past events by each community (2006, 2). One example of this is the Battle of the Boyne which is outlined by Melaugh and Lynn as follows:

The Battle of the Boyne took place in 1690 between the rival armies of the Protestant King William II and his father-in-law, the Catholic King James II. The battle took on great significance in Ireland. This was largely due to the fact that the victory of William II marked a watershed in Irish history in that it secured power for the Protestant ascendancy whilst marking the end of the Catholic nobility and gentry in Ireland. The battle itself is celebrated each year on 12 July by parades organised by the Loyal Orders. In recent times these parades have become a contentious issue between the two communities in Northern Ireland. For Protestants the parades are considered to be a celebration of their culture but for Catholics they are judged to be examples of Protestant triumphalism (2005).

According to Tosh and Lang, this results in a lack of shared 'social' memory of the past which will lead the communities in conflict to emphasise some events and exclude others (2006, 3).

In order to take these factors into account in terms of providing a 'balanced' narrative, I consulted a range of authoritative sources that reflect the perspectives of different traditions, such as the Conflict Archive on the Internet site (CAIN) based in the International Conflict Research Institute, Ulster University. To broaden my understanding of Unionism which was less developed than the nationalist/republican perspective, I focused particularly on sections of the literature that explore the historical and political background of the unionist/loyalist community, strands of anti-Catholicism within Unionism, and unionists' identity as British citizens. For example, I consulted the work of Feargal Cochrane about the ideology of Ulster unionists (1997)

and Marianne Elliott's examination of the differences between Catholic and Protestant theology and its significance in the Irish context (2009). The theme of reflexivity and 'balance' is explored more fully in chapter two.

1.6. Literature review

1.6.1. Quakers in Ireland

The scope of sociological work about Quakers in Ireland is very limited. For example, Dandelion's work about Quakers in Britain does not extend to Irish Quakerism and the sociology of British Quakers does not easily translate to Ireland because of the hybrid theological composition of IYM. Punshon only refers briefly to Irish Quakers in his work about the history and culture of BYM. Much of what has been written about Quakers in Ireland is by Irish Quakers themselves or Quakers from other Yearly Meetings. This raises a number of issues about the strengths and weaknesses of the literature which will be explored in this section.

The main issue relates to the primary focus of my study which is a sociological one, historically contextualised to show that the navigation of sectarianism has been an important factor in the development of Irish Quakerism. Irish Quakers contribute a great deal to the literature about IYM, however, this has the limitation of being mainly historical in nature, for example, Harrison (2006, 2008), Goodbody (1998) and Wigham (1992). Published work by non-Quakers include Hatton's (1993), which is also a historical account, outlining the work of Quakers in setting up relief schemes in response to events such as the 'Great Famine' in the 1840s. There is also the work of Vann and Eversley (1992) which is about the demographic transition of British and Irish Friends prior to 1900 and has limited relevance for my study.

Irish Quaker scholars provide a rich source of material from an 'insider' perspective but at times it has been difficult not to over-rely on these sources, especially Wigham's account of Irish Quaker history. In order to find other perspectives I draw on a number of journal articles by non-Quaker academics such as Marie-Louise Legg (1999) who explored the life of Alfred Webb, a late nineteenth century Irish Quaker nationalist. I also consulted a biography, by Leeann Lane (2010), of Rosamond Jacob, who was active in the Irish Republican movement in the early twentieth century. However, there is contention about the extent to which Jacob can be seen as representing Irish Quakerism, for example, a respondent with family connections to Jacob said that: 'As regards the fact that she was nominally a Quaker, probably the only way her Quaker connections affected her was to ignore them' (personal correspondence, March 2015). In addition, these two sources are mainly about individuals and neither refers to the identity of Friends in contemporary Ireland.

Friends from other Yearly Meetings, who were based in Northern Ireland during the 'Troubles', contribute to the literature about conflict reduction and community relations such as John Lampen (2011). This material and conversations with the individuals concerned were very helpful in helping me understand the scope of Quaker work in conflict reduction and anti-sectarian projects, and the sensitivities involved in Quakers coming from outside of Ireland to work alongside Irish Friends. Awareness of the tensions in IYM regarding responses to the 'Troubles' came through in these accounts and this background information was helpful when I was interviewing respondents who confirmed these impressions. This subject is explored more fully in chapters four and six of the thesis.

An important text in terms of the future direction of my research was *Coming from the Silence: Quaker Peacebuilding Initiatives in Northern Ireland 1969-2007*, (Le Mare and McCartney, 2009). This book marked the fortieth anniversary of the setting up of Ulster Quaker Service (UQS) in response to the outbreak of sectarian violence in the late 1960s. It was written to record the work of Friends during the 'Troubles' and the eight authors are Quakers who were closely involved in various peace building projects in Northern Ireland. This book was very useful in building a picture of the practical expression of Quaker work during the conflict which McCartney argues 'came from both a commitment to 'Faith in Action' and a Quaker tradition of relief and peace work' (2009, 1).

However, the focus for my research, originally about the motivation of Friends involved in 'Troubles'-related work, changed after I realised that the scope of the book covered much of what I hoped to investigate in my study. What particularly drew my attention were the short accounts of interviews with Friends who had been representatives at Quaker House in Belfast. A wish to go deeper to investigate Friends' experiences and then respondents talking about their identities led me to towards a focus on sectarianism and identity and how unity was maintained despite the diverse identities of Friends. Duke's study of the meaning of salvation for Quakers, including those in Ireland, was also very useful in confirming observations from my fieldwork both about the theological diversity of Irish Quakerism and the way that Friends negotiated their different religious experiences (2012a, 21).

To summarise, the scale of work written by Quakers about Irish Quakerism has strengths and weaknesses. The historical background outlined by different authors is

generally consistent which provides reassurance about the accuracy of the information, but there is little analysis of these events and the role of Quakers. Within the period of my study which covers 1969-2012, Irish Friends have written a number of articles about politics, culture and theology within IYM in the Irish Quaker publication *The Friendly Word* and in other publications that have helped inform my study. For example, Ross Chapman's account of the revision of the Irish Quaker anthology *Quaker Life and Practice* in *The Friends Quarterly* in 2013 provided a very useful insider perspective of the contentious issues that were highlighted by the revision process, and how conflict was managed by Quakers in Ireland. In terms of the paucity of literature about the sociology of Irish Quakers, my study makes an original contribution to Quaker Studies.

1.6.2. Identity studies

There are two main theoretical perspectives related to the formation of social identity, the literature suggesting that it is either primordial/innate or socially constructed/situational (Coleman and Collins 2004, 4). According to Simon Coleman and Peter Collins, 'the 'primordialist' view emphasises the significance of historical continuities in creating attachments to territory and communities'. For example, in the process of nation building, a 'primordialist' perspective would perceive identity as something that is an innate characteristic arising from membership of a social group, the notion of a shared culture and connection to a territorial domain (2004, 4). According to Murat Bayar, Edward Shils was the first sociologist to use the term primordialism (2009, 1641). I discuss Shils' perspective on identity in section 5.2. Conversely the social constructivist approach focuses on the ongoing process of identification in relation to self and others and how boundaries are created between

groups. It also proposes the notion that identity is more fluid than the primordialist perspective (Coleman and Collins 2004, 4-5).

In their work about evangelical Christians in Northern Ireland Claire Mitchell and Gladys Ganiel (2011) discuss changing concepts of identity which they suggest are drawn mainly from a social constructivist perspective. Richard Jenkins provides a useful definition of this approach. He asserts that:

social identity is simply – and complexly – a *process* of identification, it is no more, and no less, than *how we know who we are and who other people are*; processually, *the individually unique and the collectively shared have much in common*; identification is always a matter of *relationships of similarity AND difference*; it is also a matter of *internal definition and external definition*: this suggests that *identification can never be unilateral* (any more than self-determination can); *identity is negotiable and changeable, but when identification matters, it really matters*; and, finally, *identification is also a matter of its consequences*, as a process – rather than a 'thing', or an ideal classification – it is inherently practical (Jenkins 2000a, 6).

Mitchell and Ganiel argue that prior to the 1980s the focus of research was on what were regarded as core identities such as 'class, gender and race'. However, they assert that from the 1990s onwards there was a shift towards understanding 'how people mixed and matched their own individual identities' (2011, 15). Mitchell and Ganiel suggest that sociologists became interested in personal choice and how individuals consciously develop a sense of selfhood through awareness of their different identity categories and roles (2011, 15). They argue that religious identity is therefore very much connected to other aspects of identity and interrelated (Mitchell and Ganiel 2011, 15).

According to Mitchell and Ganiel, post-modernist theorists of identity such as Bauman (1998) extend the concept of identity fluidity, arguing that there is no core identity; that selfhood is in a state of flux and constantly negotiated depending on

external social influences (2011, 16). Stuart Hall asserts that: 'Identities are the points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us' (1996, 6). While Judith Butler proposes that, for example, gender is performed and is therefore a role not a core identity, and performative – meaning that it is reproduced through behaviour to give an impression of being a man or a woman and therefore gender is much more fluid than had been assumed (2011).

Mitchell and Ganiel outline a number of arguments against 'free choice' in terms of identity. They assert that certain core categories of race, gender and class are still very influential in the construction of identity and identity formation is relational and influenced by socialisation (2011, 16). Jenkins suggests that there is a degree of continuity and stability of identity, particularly related to what he argues are primary identity categories such as selfhood which develops during the process of primary socialisation, integrating other primary categories such as gender and ethnicity which are resistant to change. Jenkins stresses, however, that 'primary identifications are neither fixed nor timeless. Identification is something that individuals do, it is a *process*' (2014, 72).

Steph Lawler also locates herself within the social constructivist approach to identity formation. A significant theme of Lawler's work is a critique of 'Western' notions of separation between the 'self' and the social world, and trends towards individualism. Lawler argues that this leads to the creation of a sameness/difference binary which produces patterns of discrimination and privileges some identities over others (2014). Lawler stresses that identity is a process, is interconnected and always relational arguing that: 'identity itself is a social and collective process and not, as Western

traditions would have it, a unique and individual possession' (2014, 2-3). Like Jenkins, Lawler suggests that concerns about identity tend to come to the fore when it is viewed as problematic in some way. This can lead to a tendency to compare more complicated forms of identity with what is seen as unproblematic, as though the latter is normative. Lawler's work challenges assumptions that create a binary between 'unproblematic' and 'problematic' identities and instead focuses on identity-making (2014, 1-2).

Todd et al state that it is necessary to take into account both primordialist and social constructivist perspectives because this helps us to understand why ethno-national identity and oppositional identities persist when they are viewed in the context of group belonging and social ties (2006a, 324). As Todd et al assert it is also important to look at self-categorisation of identity and how individuals understand how their identity is formed. For example, some may tend towards being 'naïve primordialists' who see their identity as being innate, largely fixed and inherited (2006a, 324). According to Todd et al, these two main strands of thinking about ethno-national identity become particularly relevant during periods of social and national change when analysing the persistence of ethno-national conflict (2006a, 324-325).

To summarise, in this review of the literature about identity I referred to the two main theoretical perspectives outlined by Coleman and Collins of primordialism and social constructivism. I then outlined developments in the Academy that came out of the social constructivist approach such as work about core identities and then trends in post-modernist thinking about selfhood, identity fluidity and choice, including the counter-arguments of Jenkins and Lawler. My work is mainly located within the social

constructivist perspective of identity and the literature provides a useful frame of reference for analysing findings from the interviews. Themes such as the impact of family and broader social influences on identity, for example, how individuals negotiate internal identity categories such as political, cultural and theological labels (Jenkins) and the privileging of certain categories (Lawler) are considered within this perspective. The argument proposed by Todd that it is necessary to recognise both primordial and social constructivist perspectives, to account for the persistence of identity-related conflict, contributes to my understanding of sectarianism and the impact on identity.

My work is distinctive and makes an original contribution to the literature because it takes into account a range of perspectives about identity to explore how Friends from different traditions negotiate, and at times transcend, potentially oppositional identities, in their relationships with each other. My thesis also outlines how the category 'Quaker' can work as a meta-identity in the wider society and help build greater capacity for identities that are more fluid and less oppositional. In the next section I turn to a review of the literature about 'oppositional' identities and sectarianism and how 'fixed' or 'fluid' they are in the Irish context.

1.6.3. Identity and sectarianism in Ireland

In chapter three I examine the role of religion in Irish sectarianism which is highly contested in the Academy. For example, Steve Bruce (2009) and Mitchell (2006) stress the importance that religion and religious beliefs had on the creation of sectarianism and conflict between the nationalist and unionist communities following the partition of Ireland. However, other commentators such as Pamela Clayton

(1998) place more emphasis on the impact of English colonial policy on Ireland in institutionalising sectarianism as do Kevin Toolis (1995) and David Miller (1998), who focus particularly on the significance of colonialism and the policy of successive British governments in Northern Ireland, as explanations for the outbreak of the 'Troubles'. I argue that Liechty and Clegg's (2001) perspectives about the role of religion in Irish sectarianism can be seen as representing a more nuanced approach. They contend that sectarianism is multi-layered and complex and suggest that it is important to be wary of reductionist or over-simplistic explanations, for example, that it is all to do with colonialism or any other single factor.

Elliott's work was helpful in developing my understanding of the impact, potency and difficulties that people have of 'opting out' of sectarianism. She argues that sectarianism was experienced by people on a personal, social and political level and not just restricted to Northern Ireland but impacted on people throughout the island of Ireland (2009, 5-6). Elliott suggests that people within the sectarian divide will often be unaware of how distorted their perspectives are, holding rigid notions of identity and projecting negative views of the other community. This way of thinking is then passed on through the generations (2009, 5). Elliott concludes that sectarianism has proved to be a more potent force than social class and explains why various attempts to build alliances between working class Protestants and Catholics in the 1930s and 1960s failed (2009, 5).

In my discussion of the complex identity of respondents in chapter five, I draw on Mitchell's proposition that identity is 'hybrid'. Mitchell refers to identity as being multi-layered; these layers or strands of identity include factors such as gender, class,

cultural heritage and occupation. Mitchell suggests that some aspects of our identity may come to the fore in certain situations ‘because we take our cues from the people around us’ (2006, 12). Todd’s work about identity in Ireland following the Good Friday Agreement²¹ seemed to be a good fit with my study and I draw on her work as my main theoretical perspective, comparing her research with my findings about the identity of Quakers in Ireland. Todd’s work is about oppositional identity and sectarianism in Ireland and looks at how this functions and is maintained. Todd explores religious divisions (Catholic and Protestant), identity formation and change and she compares how these operate in both Irish states. Todd’s research looks at the impact of the different social and political structures in Ireland (north and south) on religious distinctions and national identity. She examines the persistence of conflict based on ethno-national identity and why this form of oppositional identity is so deeply embedded, particularly in Northern Ireland (Todd 2005, 2010, 2012 and Todd et al 2006a, 2006b).

The following is a summary of Todd’s main findings and arguments which are developed more fully in chapter five. For example, Todd found that self-categorisation is much more nuanced in both parts of Ireland than a simplistic Protestant/Catholic binary. There were markedly different responses in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland when respondents were asked to describe themselves. In the Republic the research found that the majority of respondents from a Catholic background were less likely to mention their religious affiliation or national identity than those born elsewhere, had previously lived or were familiar with Northern

21 Jennifer Todd led a large-scale research study in both of the Irish states between 2003 and 2006. This study generated a number of journal articles and papers, some solely authored by Todd and others by Todd and other researchers involved in the study. When talking generally about the research I refer to Todd’s findings (which are referenced and discussed more fully in chapter five). When discussing specific aspects of the study I refer to Todd or Todd et al as appropriate.

Ireland or were part of the Protestant minority. Todd suggests that where a group is in the majority and supported by state institutions, national identity is often taken for granted as the default or banal position. I found that respondents in my study from a Catholic background (all were in the Republic) were more likely to mention this and talked about remaining culturally Catholic.

Todd states that some Protestants in the Republic felt that they had to negotiate or signal their background/identity in their interactions with others. Todd argues that despite the mechanisms in place in both parts of Ireland to tackle institutional discrimination, there are still 'symbolic boundaries' that impact on how people participate in society as equal citizens. These boundaries are different in each of the Irish states. For example, in the Republic respondents from Todd's study mentioned that one boundary related to feeling part of Irish culture - some from non-Catholic backgrounds felt like 'outsiders' excluded from certain aspects of Irish society. These factors built up a picture of how people are classified as belonging or excluded from the Irish nation. In particular, to be English in the Republic is still regarded by some as being an 'outsider' more so than many other groups. Todd suggests that this can only be overcome by strong efforts on the part of these individuals to participate fully in society and embrace 'Irish' ways of interacting.

Todd found that in Northern Ireland people from both communities were more likely to disclose their religious affiliation and national identity than those in the Republic; although in Northern Ireland a significant minority stated that due to the sensitivities of the subject they preferred not to talk openly about their background. Some people avoid self-categorisation as a way of side stepping the sectarian nature of these

labels. Todd's research shows that religion continues to be an important factor in the political outlook and voting patterns of many people in Northern Ireland. Conversely I found that some of my respondents in Northern Ireland voted for non-sectarian or nationalist parties. Others found different forms of political activism such as single-issue campaigns as an alternative to sectarian-based party politics and this concurred with my findings.

Todd argues that Northern Ireland has different boundaries which act as triggers of contestation, for example, religion, nationality and political affiliation which at times join together as a major divisive factor. Todd found that identity can be 'thick' or 'thin' depending on how deeply embedded a person's sense of identity is. The more embedded the harder it is for individuals to change their sense of identification because of the effort involved and impact on relationships. Todd suggests that in Northern Ireland it is possible to detect a movement away from cultural identity in both communities to what Todd calls a 'thinner state-centred identity' with some seeing themselves as Northern Irish rather than British or Irish. However, none of the respondents in my study referred to themselves as Northern Irish. Todd goes on to assert that Protestants in Northern Ireland have had the possibility of developing more hybrid identities than Catholics, because of the wider variety of ways that they could describe themselves e.g. Northern Irish, British, Ulster-Scots, but that this is not the same as category fluidity or category change, the latter being much more difficult, especially in the Northern Irish context. As Todd asserts:

...in both the Irish state and Northern Ireland, nationality is important and related to a sense of belonging, of cultural legacy, political loyalty, local tradition and familial history. But where – for Southern Catholics – local belonging, political loyalty, cultural proclivities and familial tradition all feed into a multi-faceted national identity, in Northern Ireland respondents often disaggregate these facets (2012, 11).

To conclude, in many instances there was an overlap between Todd's research and my findings. However, interviews with Friends in Ireland, informal conversations and attendance at Irish Quaker gatherings have revealed the more complex, 'hybrid' identities of Friends than is revealed in the literature outlined earlier. Irish Quakers have a diverse range of views in matters related to religion, national identity and political affiliation. These positions did not follow a simple north/south divide but are in part a reflection of a theological division between liberal and evangelical Quakers. I argue that the concept of 'hybrid' identity can be extended beyond Mitchell's and Todd's definitions to include ways that the category 'Quaker' was consciously employed by some Friends to transcend sectarian divisions and find a middle way between the Catholic and Protestant binary. These findings are a significant aspect of my research and will be discussed fully in the thesis and illustrated by the use of case studies and a selection of quotes from the interviews.

1.7. Outline of the thesis

Chapter two focuses on the research methodology for the study which is explored extensively because, as I go on to suggest in the next chapter, this has been critical in developing the ethical dimension and validity of the research. The main themes of this chapter include my motivation for the research and aims of the study. I then go on to explore the main theoretical perspectives, rationale for the research methods

and their evaluation. Reflexivity, ethical issues pertinent to the study and how these were managed are also considered.

Chapter three is concerned with the development of sectarianism in Ireland and the role of religion and other relevant factors. It examines the impact of sectarianism on identity formation, the political and social development of the two Irish states after the partition of Ireland, the origins of the 'Troubles' and resulting identity related conflict.

Chapter four outlines the history of Quaker settlement in Ireland and its relationship to the wider dissenting tradition, the positioning of Quakers in Irish society and navigation of sectarian-related violence and political structures; it charts the development of a distinctive Quaker culture and organisational structures. This chapter also has an overview of Quaker initiatives in response to major crises in Ireland including the 'Great Famine' and the 'Troubles'.

Chapter five is about personal identity and introduces key sociological theories of identity construction linking these to the literature about identity and sectarianism. This chapter introduces an identity matrix based on findings from the interviews to demonstrate the complexity of Friends' identities in terms of their political, cultural and theological backgrounds and perspectives. There are two case studies that illustrate particular themes of identity negotiation and transcendence, and examples of how individual Friends challenged and responded to sectarianism. I compare and contrast my findings about Quaker identity with Todd's work and highlight areas of overlap and divergence.

Chapter six explores the impact of the diverse identity of Friends on the corporate identity and culture of IYM. This chapter explores the finding that relational unity was prioritised within IYM and looks at how contentious issues were managed and the consequences of this approach on parts of the Society and individual Friends.

Chapter seven sets out the main findings from the research; there is a wide ranging discussion of meta-identities and the extent to which 'Quaker' works as a meta-identity within the organisation.

Chapter eight concludes the thesis by considering alternative explanations for findings such as the one about relational unity, discusses different forms of meta-identity and examines my contention that 'Quaker' could act as a form of meta-identity in the two Irish states. It then outlines the implications of this study for current scholarship and future research.

1.8. Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the main arguments underpinning the thesis, in particular how the legacy of sectarianism in Ireland impacted on the identity of Friends and resulted in the development of a model of complex identity management which prioritised relational unity. The chapter outlined the background and context of this research study. It provided an introduction to the history, culture and theology of Quakerism and specifically to Irish Quakers. I discussed my approach to the complex issue of language, terminology and historical 'balance'. There was a review of the literature about Quakers in Ireland; its strengths and weaknesses and the main theoretical perspectives about identity with a particular focus on Irish identity and sectarianism. The main themes for subsequent chapters were summarised. In the

next chapter I set out the research methodology for the thesis, explore the theoretical perspectives that underpin the study and reflect on my 'positioning' within the research.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I summarise the aims of the study (2.2) and explore my motivation for undertaking this research (2.3). I discuss the research methodology and theoretical perspectives that provide the framework for the study, the rationale for changing the focus of the study (2.4), and outline the research methods used and reasons why these were chosen (2.5 – 2.7). Finally, I reflect on my role as a researcher (2.8) and examine the ethical considerations involved in a study of this nature (2.9).

2.2. Aims and nature of the study

This research is about Quakers in Ireland, the nature of sectarianism and its impact on the individual and corporate identity of the Religious Society of Friends. It examines ways in which Quakers developed a model of complex identity management which I argue prioritised relational unity.

Sectarianism has its roots in the 12th century when Ireland became an English colony and can be seen as resulting from a complex mixture of ethnic, political and religious factors. The development of the two Irish states after Ireland was partitioned reinforced pre-existing sectarian or 'oppositional' identities and is reflected in the Protestant/Catholic and nationalist/unionist binary identity categories. The outbreak of the violent conflict in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s commonly known as the 'Troubles' is a recent example of how these 'oppositional' identities were played out (see chapter three).

Using a case study based on interviews with Irish Quakers, I investigated the impact of sectarianism, what form this took, and how Friends responded to sectarianism both within the organisation and in the wider society. I also looked for evidence of identity transformation and explored how the organisation managed the wide political and theological diversity of its membership, particularly in Northern Ireland.

2.3. Motivation for doing the research

Irish Quakerism was chosen as the subject for this study for two main reasons. Firstly, I had a long standing interest in Irish history and politics and the development of sectarianism, and the reasons why this has at times resulted in violent conflict between communities with embedded 'oppositional' identities. I had studied British imperial history, including the colonial period in Ireland, and I saw this research as a way of further developing these interests. Secondly, I regarded the research as a way of bringing together different aspects of my identity as a second-generation Irish Catholic person, brought up in England, now a Quaker. I became disenchanted with Catholicism in my teenage years and developed an identity that was anti-Catholic and later politically anti-British imperialism and a supporter of Irish Nationalism. I felt proud of being Irish but was also aware of not quite fitting in as a second-generation person. I wondered if Quakers in Ireland also felt like outsiders at times. I became aware in the early stages of the research that Irish Friends were a minority within a minority in each of the Irish states and was interested in how they negotiated the sectarian divide on the island of Ireland and the extent to which they were able to maintain a position of 'neutrality'. I decided that these different aspects could work well together as the subject of a research study. Originally the study was going to be about the motivation of Friends involved in 'Troubles'-related work, however, the

focus of the research changed when the respondents that I interviewed started to talk more about their identities than the original research topic. The methodological basis for this change in direction is explored more fully in the next section.

2.4. Introduction to methodology

According to Gina Wisker, research methodology is an exploration of the 'rationale and philosophical assumptions underlying a particular study, rather than just the collection of methods' (2008, 67). In this section I outline and justify the research paradigms I chose to investigate the impact of sectarianism on the identity of Irish Friends.

2.4.1. Qualitative research

The methodological approach I chose for this study was qualitative research. I chose qualitative research methods for a number of reasons. Firstly, because the focus in qualitative research is on describing and interpreting findings about people's lives, for example, feelings, experiences, behaviours, relationships and membership of social groups, rather than quantifying these findings for the purpose of statistical analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 11). In addition, Alan Bryman argues that qualitative research involves a strategy with a:

...preference for an emphasis on the ways in which individuals interpret their social world; and embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals' creation (2001, 20)

Secondly, qualitative research supported the inductive and evolutionary approach that I used to build theory from my findings. As Bryman suggests, unlike the deductive approach which establishes hypotheses at the beginning of the research process in order to test them out, the inductive approach involves constructing theory

from the data, which in turn leads to changes in the methodology to integrate new learning about the research topic (2001, 9-10). John Lofland et al assert that another feature of qualitative research is that researchers are the main instruments of the research process in the sense that the researcher's identity, experience and reflexivity all contribute to the study (this subject is explored in more detail in section 2.7) which fitted with my motivation for this research. Lofland et al further argue that 'only through direct observation and/or participation can we get close to apprehending those studied and the character of their social worlds and lives' (2006, 3).

The third factor in my choice of methodological approach was that it matched Jennifer Todd's qualitative work about identity in Ireland (as outlined in chapter one) which provided the theoretical underpinning for this study. Todd argues that:

To identify subtle changes in collective identity categories requires attention to the cultural meanings of these categories as well as to behaviour and boundaries, and analysis of how these meanings are constituted and changed in different micro-contexts, as well as at the macro level (2005, 431).

Todd et al outline some of the advantages of using a qualitative approach in the study of identity in micro-contexts stating, for example, that the quantitative studies already undertaken about the meaning of identity in Ireland tend to focus mainly on the category of identity and downplay the content and values associated with these identities therefore not detecting the more nuanced way that different aspects of identity are combined (2006b, 366). In referring to major socio-political and economic developments in Ireland in recent years, Todd et al argue that: 'In this changing, contentious, theory-driven and politically charged field, the need for qualitative research is clear' (2006b 367).

A qualitative approach seemed most suitable to achieve the purpose of my research – to collect the richest data possible about the meaning of identity for Irish Friends and their perceptions of the culture of Irish Quakerism. In terms of the research sample (discussed in 2.5.1) it was not my intention to identify a representative sample for the study. My study fits with other qualitative work such as that undertaken by Nicola Slee (2004). Asserting that individual narratives have their own validity and value, Slee aims to produce an account of women's faith development 'which is self-authenticating in its own terms, which allows theoretical constructs to be developed from the 'ground' upwards' (2004, 4).

Bryman outlines some common criticisms of qualitative research which he suggests tend to be based on comparisons with quantitative methodology (2001, 282); these criticisms are as follows:

- Subjectivity – that there is an over-reliance on the researcher's perspective about what data is significant and the relationships between researchers and respondents. Connected to this is another criticism of what is regarded as a lack of clarity about decisions made by qualitative researchers about the reasons for the eventual focus of their work (Bryman 2001, 282).
- There is difficulty in replicating the research findings because of the lack of a standardised approach to qualitative studies, the tendency for the data to be unstructured and the role of the researcher as the main instrument of the research. This means that the relationship between researcher and respondent (and therefore the data) is unique to that study (Bryman 2001, 282).

- There is a lack of transparency regarding how the researcher reached particular research findings, certain decisions made by the researcher such as how and why certain respondents were chosen and the unclear process of data analysis. Bryman suggests that many of these concerns are now being attended to by qualitative researchers (2001, 283).
- That there can be a lack of generalisation to other settings due to the small scale nature of many qualitative research studies and the lack of representative sampling (2001, 282). However as Bryman asserts:

...the findings of qualitative research are to generalise to theory rather than to populations...it is the quality of the theoretical inferences that are made out of qualitative data that is crucial to the assessment of generalisation (2001, 283).

There is further discussion of some of the issues raised above, such as subjectivity as a valid aspect of research methodology, in section 2.7 which explores the role of reflexivity in the study.

2.4.2. Rationale for change in focus

My perspective about the focus of the study changed and new insights emerged as a result of talking to various contacts, the first interviews, experiences such as attending conferences and background reading. As outlined in 2.4.1 a significant feature of qualitative research involves building theory from the data rather than applying fixed concepts. This approach is exemplified by the outcome of a meeting with one research 'gatekeeper'. The subject of Irish Quakers' identity and where they were positioned in the two Irish states was raised. Questions emerged such as: 'Are Irish Quakers Protestant?' I was told that some claim Unionism as part of their identity, others have a greater affinity with the nationalist community. This triggered

the importance to me of keeping an all-Ireland perspective on Quakerism rather than focus primarily on the response of Friends in Northern Ireland to the 'Troubles' (meeting with research contact August 2010). Identity was also highlighted very strongly by respondents in the first few interviews. I found this subject very intriguing and because it had been raised by a number of respondents decided to develop a theoretical framework around the meaning of identity for Quakers in a sectarian context rather than follow the original theme of religious motivation for involvement in 'Troubles'-related work. It can be argued that the study benefitted from my initial openness to themes emerging from the interviews and what was of significance to the respondents, although I became more specific about the focus of the study as it progressed and therefore selective about which themes were eventually included in the research findings.

In terms of data collection, I consciously did some initial analysis and coding of the findings. This helped me to make sense of the significant amount of data that I was collecting. Bryman outlines some of the practical difficulties associated with the amount of data produced, the time involved in transcription, and with analysing and re-assessing the data (2001, 395-396). This reflected my experience during the data collection and analysis stage. I return to this aspect of the research process in section 2.7.1.

2.4.3. Section summary

In this section I outlined the reasons why I chose qualitative research methodology for my study and some of the strengths and potential drawbacks of this approach. I

then discussed why the direction of the research shifted from a focus on religious motivation to an exploration of the meaning of identity for respondents in the study.

2.5. Data collection

In addition to conducting a literature review of the secondary sources relating to the main themes of the thesis, I identified and surveyed relevant primary sources, for example, articles in the Irish Quaker journal, *The Friendly Word*, and relevant records held at the Friends Historical Library in Dublin. However, my main source of data collection was through interviews. The next section discusses how I identified the sample group and explores the use of interviews and participant observation.

2.5.1. Sample group

In 2010 there were a total of 2141 members and attenders in the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, including children under the age of 18. Ulster Quarterly Meeting (QM)²² which covers Northern Ireland has the largest number of adult Friends of the three QMs with 899 (Yearly Meeting of Friends in Ireland 2010). (The structure of IYM is discussed more fully in 6.4.1). Participants for this study were identified through contacts that put me in touch with Irish Friends, networking at Quaker events, letters to the clerks of Preparative Meetings (PMs)²³ in Ireland and a notice about my research in *The Friendly Word*. A total of 15 people agreed to be interviewed, and they came from Meetings both in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. I also corresponded with a number of other Irish Friends who provided useful background information about the culture of Irish Quakerism. In

²² QM will be used hereafter.

²³ PM will be used hereafter.

addition, there were two British Quakers who had been based at Quaker House in Belfast, who agreed to be interviewed about their impressions of IYM.

In terms of demographic information about the respondents, there were seven women and eight men – aged from 50 years onwards. The main drawback of the approach I used was that the people I eventually interviewed were self-selected and that not all sections and perspectives of the Yearly Meeting were represented in the study; for example, young Friends and a large evangelical PM in Northern Ireland. However, the gender balance of the respondents represented the IYM ratios to a certain extent – in 2010 there were 665 men and 725 women in membership (Yearly Meeting of Friends in Ireland 2010). In addition, a high proportion of the Friends that I corresponded with or spoke to informally, but did not interview, were women.

2.5.2. Interviews

The main research method I used was in-depth interviews. Lofland et al stress that it is important to choose the appropriate research method for the project (2006, 19). According to Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin, in-depth interviews are most suitable when the purpose of the research is to understand an individual's process, experiences, emotions and motivation (2005, 2-3). Norman Blaikie adds that a major advantage of interviews is that they 'can get close to the social actors' meanings and interpretation, to their accounts of the social interaction in which they have been involved' (2010, 207). Slee argues that qualitative interviews help keep the study grounded in the experiences of the respondents, and, for the researcher, are the most important source of data and connection with their research (2004, 11). Another reason why I chose interviews as my main research method was personal preference

– I enjoyed exploration through dialogue and found the interviews emotionally satisfying. Additionally, interviews may be beneficial for research respondents in terms of having the opportunity to share their narratives and perceptions with a sympathetic listener.

The interviews I carried out were semi-structured in the sense that they were neither completely open nor completely structured. As Steiner Kvale asserts semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to maintain awareness of the key purpose of their investigation while not closing down interesting areas that emerge during the interview (2007, 12). Kvale also suggests that:

interviews are particularly suited for studying people's understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world (2007, 46).

In my study, interviews also complemented the exploration of historical themes and perspectives outlined in chapters three and four. Rubin and Rubin add that qualitative interviewing helps fill in the gaps in history (2005, 3).

Potential drawbacks of interviewing as a research method include the following.

Firstly, according to Kvale, 'the research interview is an inter-view where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between two people' (2007, 13). Therefore different knowledge is likely to be produced with a different interviewer (Kvale 2007, 14).

Secondly, there are also issues related to the power imbalance between the interviewer and interviewee which may result in respondents being unintentionally led and then giving the answers that they think the researcher wants to hear (Kvale 2007, 14). Cate Watson further argues that in qualitative interviews power dynamics combined with the inherent ambiguity of language discourse means that both

respondents and researchers are ‘unreliable narrators’; this can result in concerns about the ‘validity’ of the data (2006, 367). Watson asserts however that:

... the unreliable narration gives rise to a kind of situated reliability. It is the very shifts and gaps in the narrative, the aspects that threaten the collapse of coherence, that hint at the changes in our identities (2006, 382).

Watson rebuts criticisms levelled at qualitative interviews in terms of their apparent lack of reliability and validity by reframing this approach to data collection as a strength; contending that useful insights into the research process are produced, and data analysis shows the construction of original narratives about identity created in the interaction between respondents and researchers (2006, 382). The latter point is explored in section 2.7.1 which focuses on data analysis. The next section outlines the main principles of good practice in terms of interviewing that I took into account in creating an interview guide.

2.5.3. Constructing the interview guide

I prepared a guide with the main topics I wanted to cover during the interview listed in order with possible questions next to each topic (see appendix 1). I took into account recommendations in the literature about approaches to constructing the guide. For example, Kvale discusses the importance of posing questions using everyday rather than academic language (2007, 58). Bryman asserts that the most important function of the interview guide is to assist the researcher in understanding the social world of the respondent and what is of significance to them not just the researcher; a flexible approach to interviewing is therefore necessary (2001, 317). Lofland et al suggest that the researcher considers the perspective of the people being interviewed and to ‘think about what will make sense to them’ (2006, 101). In addition, they recommend

that sensitive or difficult questions are raised later in the interview and that the interview begins with neutral or more factual questions (Lofland et al 2006, 101).

Kvale also suggests that researchers need to be careful with asking why questions; they can seem confrontational and provoke a defensive reaction. It is suggested that these are better asked towards the end of the interview (2007, 58). Lofland et al stress the importance of avoiding leading questions which may only produce what they term 'self-fulfilling answers' (2006, 105) and closed questions, unless they are asked to elicit specific information (2006, 106). In addition, Dandelion emphasises that questions should be unambiguous rather than too complex which may result in them being open to different interpretations by respondents (1996, 60).

2.5.4. Piloting the interviews

I conducted three pilot interviews with Quakers in my local area, two women and one man. One person was a 'birthright' Quaker, the others Quakers by 'convincement'. I chose to approach these people because I did not know them very well and thought that this would more closely replicate the experience of interviewing Irish Quakers for the study. Once the agreement to be interviewed was given, I explained the purpose of the pilot interview and how the interview would be recorded. I decided to ask each person to think about what being a Quaker meant to them and to consider any cause or campaign that they felt particularly strongly about in advance of the interview.

The pilot interviews were very useful in a number of ways in terms of learning about the following areas:

- My interviewing style: for example, one of the interviewees seemed to find it difficult to articulate the things she felt strongly about. I decided to concentrate

my focus on encouraging conversational flow in the first half of the interview and continued to ask prompt questions until the person became more relaxed. In another interview it became evident that my questions were not focused enough and there was a lack of clarity about the direction of the interview. From this experience I gathered that I needed to focus more on what it is I wanted to find out from my respondents and to ensure that the questions were clear and coherent. In hindsight I reflected that each interview brings its own challenges and it was useful to have the interview guide as a prompt but to be used flexibly.

- Emotional energy: I found that the experience of interviewing people was very intense and at times I felt tired by the effort of maintaining interest and concentration; that I needed time to debrief and rest after the interviews. My intention with Irish Quakers was to avoid staying with anyone that I was going to interview and not to interview more than one person a day, unless this was necessary for practical reasons.
- Debriefing for interview respondents: I allowed time for debriefing at the end of all of the pilot interviews. Kvale highlights the importance of taking into account that interview respondents may experience uncomfortable feelings such as vulnerability, anxiety and emptiness. They may find it useful to have the opportunity to say what the experience was like for them and to be asked if there is anything else they would like to say or ask about (Kvale 2007, 56). I found that debriefing was an important element of the interview experience.
- Recording the interviews: I used a small digital voice recorder (DVR). It was unobtrusive, easy to use and the sound quality was very good. However, one

of the respondents in the pilot interviews visibly relaxed when I turned off the voice recorder and we carried on talking for a bit longer. This indicates that some people may feel self-conscious about being recorded.

- Location of the interviews: The final pilot interview was at my home at the person's request. When I listened to the recording later there was background noise and we were interrupted by my phone ringing. Although during the fieldwork stage, the location of the interviews was based on practical considerations and what was mutually convenient; my preference was for a quiet space with the minimal possibility of interruptions.

In the following section I discuss the next stage of the study and some of the ways that I incorporated learning both from the pilot interviews and the literature on interviewing.

2.5.5. Interviewing research respondents

In terms of putting into practice what I had learnt about interviewing, I took into account Kvale's point that 'the setting of the interview stage should encourage the interviewee to describe their points of view on their lives and worlds. The first few minutes of an interview are decisive' (2007, 55). Before starting to record the interviews I checked that the respondents understood the purpose of my research and clarified whether the person wanted to be identified or remain anonymous. I also discussed with the person what we would do if they wanted to speak 'off the record'. This in fact happened during one interview and I stopped the recording for a time (confidentiality is discussed in section 2.9.3). I began the interviews with more neutral or factual questions and asked each person to assume that I had very little

knowledge of Irish Quakerism. I found ways of asking why questions by using alternative words such as 'tell me about' and 'what was it like when?'

Both Kvale (2007, 47) and Rubin and Rubin (2005, 31-32) discuss the role of the interviewer as being an integral instrument of the research and stress the need for self-reflection and training to be an effective and empathic interviewer. Relevant skills, training and experience gained in my previous careers in social work and teaching were helpful in my role as an interviewer. In general, I found that most of the interviews flowed well and the opening questions triggered a lot of sharing on the part of respondents. My role was to gently guide the person back to the main themes that I wanted to explore with them. Some respondents seemed more guarded or reluctant to state a position. However, when I listened to these interviews I was at times surprised by what was shared that I had not picked up on at the time.

Kvale states that the interviewer should be open to novel and unexpected revelations rather than fixed, closed expectations of the outcome; that it is important to have awareness of preconceived ideas and be sensitive to how these are challenged or confirmed (2007, 12). Blaikie also makes the point that the use of loosely structured interviews involves some personal involvement on the part of the researcher. The main goal during these experiences is not to maintain detachment and objectivity (Blaikie 2010, 214). In terms of the role of the interviewer and how they position themselves Watson argues that:

Neutrality and interactivity may therefore be considered to constitute an unsustainable binary since both involve decisions about how to act in a particular situation in order to elicit information (2006, 369).

However, Kvale raises the issue of the need for awareness of boundaries and the

risk of the interview becoming a form of therapy, especially as some of the characteristics of an effective interview style and interpersonal skills such as reflective listening, overlap (2007, 19.) Andrew Finlay raises another point which is related to researchers over-identifying with respondents because of what they assume to be shared backgrounds or experiences (2001, 65). He asserts that researchers should be prepared to reflect on the impact of their own identity on the response of interviewees; on the research findings and how these are analysed (Finlay 2001, 65). The issue of how I negotiated my own boundaries and feelings and the sensitivity of some of the subject matter explored in the interviews is discussed in section 2.8 which is about reflexivity and section 2.9 which explores ethical issues connected to this research.

2.5.6. Section summary

In this section I outlined the composition of the sample group and discussed the main form of data collection for the study which was semi-structured interviews. I justified why I chose interviews and how I took into account learning from piloting them. I also explored ideas from the literature about good practice in terms of constructing the interview guide and approaches to interviewing. Finally I gave some examples of the way I approached interviewing respondents for this study.

2.6. Participant observation

According to Bryman:

Participant observation... is primarily associated with qualitative research and entails the relatively prolonged immersion of the observer in a social setting in which he or she seeks to observe the behaviour of members of that setting... and to elicit the meanings they attribute to their environment and behaviour.

Participant observers vary considerably in how much they participate in the social settings in which they locate themselves (2001, 163).

At the start of my fieldwork the main aim was to meet people willing to be interviewed. I spent three very intense days with an Irish Friend who offered to host me. I was taken to visit a number of the Quaker Service projects and then to a meeting of Friends and introduced to various people. The first person I met at this event asked me directly what I was doing and why. He questioned what else there was left to research about Quakers and the 'Troubles' (the subject of my study at the time) and commented that the unionist community had been unfairly portrayed and the peace settlement was a fudge. I found it hard to justify my presence as a researcher and it was an uncomfortable place to be. Another person said that she had no interest in talking to me because she did not want to think about the 'Troubles' anymore but her husband was very keen to participate in the study.

These brief interactions gave me important clues about some of the sensitivities within Irish Quakerism that began to emerge during the fieldwork. It also gave me an insight into the social context of Irish Quakerism. I then met three people who agreed to be interviewed during my stay. At this stage I was very much an observer, although as time progressed and I went to other Quaker events in Ireland I became more of a participant observer. It was very helpful to have a research journal for reflection, learning and as a way of grounding myself. This is also recommended in the literature about qualitative research methods, for example, Kvale (2007, 43).

The logistics of fieldwork were also challenging at times for a number of reasons. Although some people contacted me in response to flyers I sent out and arranged a time to meet when I was in Ireland, others wanted to meet me in person before they

made a commitment to be interviewed – checking my motivation and integrity appeared to be the reason for this. This meant that on a number of future occasions I needed to leave things open and left for Ireland with no interviews scheduled. However, this approach worked well and I always found people who were prepared to be interviewed – flexibility on my part seemed to be crucial. On one occasion it meant that, despite advice from my supervisor not to stay with someone who I was going to interview, I accepted a respondent's offer to host me and interviewed that person and five other people over two days which was very tiring but ultimately rewarding in terms of data collection.

Staying in Ireland for several days to make the most of fieldwork opportunities was also emotionally draining and costly. I found that it was necessary to be well organised for these trips and in addition to managing complicated travel arrangements, remembering to bring pens, pencils and notebooks, spare hearing aid and DVR batteries and a battery recharger for my mobile phone with credit so it was usable in the Republic of Ireland. One major frustration of fieldwork was not being able to fully connect with all the people I met. For example, I tried to have a conversation with a Friend who seemed very keen to talk to me at an event where the background music was too loud to hear properly; it was the usual problem when people are about to say something interesting they tend to drop their voices. Looking back I wish that I had admitted that I was tired, could not fully hear what they were saying and made another time to talk.

Overall the experience of attending Quaker events in Ireland as a participant observer was very enriching. In addition to gaining new insights that were helpful for

the study, I met many people by chance who were willing to talk to me. What I observed at these gatherings confirmed many of the themes that emerged from the interviews and helped me understand the social context of Irish Quakerism.

2.7. Transcription theory

In this section I discuss some of the issues related to transcription theory and the principles that I took into account in preparing the transcripts of the interview recordings. In terms of the theoretical basis of the nature of 'data', Martyn Hammersley suggests that it is essential for social researchers to focus on the meaning that is given to data (2010, 554). Hammersley discusses different perspectives about how knowledge is gathered and understood within which he argues:

...there are two analytically distinct senses given to the term 'data', and echoes of these continue to provide its main meanings. First, it refers to what is *given* to us from outside: that which is unmediated by us, or independent of us, and (so naïve foundationalism assumes) can therefore be assumed to be beyond all possible doubt in terms of its validity. From this point of view, whatever is given simply *is* what it is; or, more precisely, it is what it *appears* to be. The second meaning of the term is that data are the premises from which we draw logical inferences to conclusions; in other words, it concerns what we *take* to be given in making inferences (2010, 554).

The implication of this statement, according to Hammersley, is that 'data' are not 'objective' facts and our observations and assumptions are socially constructed (2010, 554). Hammersley asserts that this argument also applies to transcriptions of interviews and other qualitative research methods (2010, 555).

Tweed asserts that no theory can be 'morally neutral' – we must remain aware of our moral values and perspective about how knowledge is constructed 'since scholarly interpretations reflect and shape the social, political, and economic order' (2006, 27).

Kvale also makes the point that interview transcription is an interpretative process rather than just a functional task (2007, 92). In addition, Kvale contends that when translating oral speech into written text certain issues are raised for the transcriber such as, how to manage the different language structures of oral and written language and how to convey intonation, body language and the atmosphere of the interview; furthermore Kvale argues that the transformation of oral to written language can result in the loss of many subtle nuances (2007, 93). Hammersley outlines some additional decisions that need to be made about transcription including: how much of the recording to transcribe, whether to have a notation system for intonation, pitch and pauses, whether to include non-word noises such as 'ums', where and how to add punctuation and how to label the speakers (2010, 556).

Christina Davidson undertook a survey of the literature published about transcription theory between 1979 and 2009, suggesting some implications for researchers using qualitative methods (2009, 35). Davidson quoted work by Ochs (1979) which asserted that transcription has a theoretical basis and any notation system chosen should be based on the primary aims of the research study (2009, 35). Davidson asserts that transcription is the result of choices made by researchers and the way that they code all aspects of the communication reflects the transcribers' theoretical position and how the communication is represented. Rather than see this as problematic, Davidson suggests that selectivity can be regarded as a necessity which should be justified in terms of the purpose of the study (2009, 38).

Watson states that ambiguity about what was said and meant by interviewees will also need to be taken into account in the process of transcription (2006, 368).

Davison suggests that researchers who use transcription services need to give clear

guidance about their requirements, avoid over-reliance on the transcriptions and refer back to the primary data when necessary, be aware of the potential for transcriber inaccuracy and take into account ethical issues such as confidentiality (2009, 43). Additionally, Hammersley contends that transcriptions need not stand alone in terms of providing data. Researchers can draw on their own impressions, observations and knowledge of the field when formulating conclusions (2010, 565). He also stated that it is best to avoid a single fixed approach to transcription and to be open to the methods that are appropriate for each stage of the research (Hammersley 2010, 565). Hammersley concludes that too much emphasis on the constructivist approach can lead to a view that the interpretation and transcription of interviews inevitably results in a new narrative constructed by the researcher (2010, 558-9). He goes on to assert that it is necessary to hold both concepts of 'construction' and 'givenness' in transcribing narratives rather than seeing them as being opposed (Hammersley, 2010, 559).

I developed an approach to transcription which took into account some of the issues raised above and included the following elements:

- I took notes after the interviews about my impressions of factors such as the respondents' body language and the atmosphere of the interviews. This information was very useful when I started the process of coding the transcripts. I kept a separate record in my research journal of my own reactions and experiences of interviewing to enhance awareness of my impact on the research.
- I developed a notation code that was easy to use and included ways to highlight intonation and emotion. Transcription was very time-consuming and

tiring so I reduced the workload by, for example, the use of acronyms. I checked the original recordings when I was concerned about ambiguity or possible inaccuracy in the transcripts. After the initial interviews, when I became clearer about the main focus of the study, I summarised those parts of the interviews that were less relevant.

These guidelines gave clarity to the process of transcription and helped with coding the data. In addition, although I eventually did most of the transcription myself, some of it was done by another person, and I gave them information about the study and the notation system that I wanted them to use (see appendix 2). It would have been useful also if the other transcriber had been able to act as a shadow ethnographer in order to compare impressions about the interview data, as recommended in the literature (Dandelion 1996, 42), however this was not possible. In terms of how the transcription process worked out in practice these are some additional observations:

- It was helpful to have heard the interviews again and to have taken field notes, especially as I was aware that important nuances such as body language can get lost when listening to a recorded interview. I found the notation guide helpful, especially when I needed to go back and check a transcript with the recording. Noting the time each time the interviewee spoke made it easier to find the relevant section.
- When I selected quotations to illustrate particular sections of the thesis I focused on how to maintain the original meaning of the quote while removing repetition and the 'ums' etc to maintain clarity for the reader. Eventually the quotes were sent to the respondents for permission to use them (see section 2.9). At this point the respondents either gave permission immediately while

some wanted to make minor changes. This was useful because the small number of factual inaccuracies and typographical errors that I had introduced in the transcript were removed. Also a number of respondents asked if they could make some slight amendments to the quotes to improve the meaning – this I agreed to. The process of comparing the recordings of interviews with the transcripts illustrated the differences that emerged between oral and written communication – the latter was problematic for some of the respondents who felt that their accounts had not been very coherent.

The next section focuses on how I analysed the interview data and identified the main themes for the study.

2.7.1. Qualitative analysis

Lofland et al refer to the three interconnected tasks of social science research which are gathering data, focusing data in terms of theoretical concepts and questions, and analysing data; stating although it is necessary to have data to analyse, focusing and drawing inferences from the data are performed at the same time (2006, 1). In terms of qualitative data analysis, Bryman stresses the importance of having general guidelines in place so that significant aspects of the data are not missed and to avoid feeling overwhelmed by the amount of data produced by interviewing (2001, 388).

In my approach to data analysis I loosely followed Bryman's recommendations which were to start coding early in the fieldwork in order to identify broad themes in the data; read through field notes and the transcripts to look for areas of significance; eventually reread all of the data – this time picking up key words and themes; review the codes and start making connections between them; relate codes to theoretical perspectives and start to develop hypotheses to explain these connections, and

finally begin the process of interpreting findings from the data (2001, 398-399).

Lofland et al add that after broad themes have been identified, it will be necessary to take out data which may be interesting but not relevant to the scope of the study (2006, 201).

The practicalities of coding began after I transcribed the first three interviews and printed out the transcripts. I did some initial coding and identified the broad themes using different coloured highlighting pens. When the focus of my research changed, I underlined key passages in the transcripts as I was writing them up – this made it easier when I started to do more focused coding. At the same time I checked my field notes against the transcripts. After the transcripts were completed and I had identified the main themes I created one document which contained the themes from each interview which I now started to break down into more detailed codes. I also selected a number of possible quotes from the interviews to illustrate some of the key points. Although it took a long time to transfer all the data into one document it made it easier for me to see which themes were coming out strongly; to make the connections between the respondents and ultimately to select which themes would form the basis of the study and which would have to be removed. In order to check that I was not just following my own interest in personal identity, I picked a random selection of the transcripts and systematically checked them for references to identity. This process reassured me that the data I selected was a major theme of the interviews.

As mentioned above the process of transcribing and coding the data was very time consuming. Because I was using an inductive approach where the role of researcher

in data analysis was central, I felt that it was not appropriate to use data analysis software (Lofland et al 2006, 195-196). However, by immersing myself in the data and being systematic about data analysis, I did not become overwhelmed by the task and felt confident that the process of coding I used had produced valid data for the study. Although Bryman refers to assertions made by Coffey and Atkinson (1996) that the process of breaking down and coding data could result in a disjointed picture of the person's social context and loss of 'narrative flow' (2001, 397), I did not find this to be the case and continued to have a strong sense of the people I interviewed and their narratives.

2.8. Reflexivity

This section discusses the literature about the status of the researcher as insider or outsider. I then reflect on my own position within this study. I explore some examples of the personal impact of the research and how I took my perceptions and feelings into account during the course of the study.

2.8.1. Insider/outsider status in research

In his discussion of what has been termed the insider/outsider problem in the academic study of religion, Russell McCutcheon reflects on the extent to which it is possible for researchers to gain insight into the social world of people when they are outsiders to the group (1999, 1-2). McCutcheon goes on to assert that it is the task of social research to overcome the gap between insiders and outsiders (1999, 2-3). McCutcheon suggests that there are four main approaches taken by researchers to the insider/outsider issue in the study of religious experience:

- The empathetic position aims to develop tools to enable researchers to understand the meanings, behaviours and beliefs of others by utilising empathy and a non-judgemental approach – sharing respondents' feelings and emotions. Analytic tools are then employed to interpret these meanings and emotions and build theory about the research findings (McCutcheon 1999, 3).
- Building theories from the outside – this approach is based on the concept of employing theoretical models to explain the social world; using empirical methods to explore human behaviours and beliefs. However, McCutcheon argues that this approach can result in there being too great a focus on 'objectivity' and denial of the respondents' own understanding of their social world (1999, 4).
- The methodologically agnostic position which states that no one can really know the truth of another's religious claim and that it is only possible to describe the variety of religious experience rather than evaluate it. The drawback of this approach is that it implies that it is possible for researchers to assume positions of 'neutrality' and can result in findings that are mainly descriptive and lack analysis (McCutcheon 1999, 6-8).
- The reflexive position assumes that those being researched and researchers alike share experiences of the social world and 'neutrality' is not a realistic aspiration (1999, 8-9). Researchers using a reflexive approach try to bridge the gap between insiders and outsiders 'through generalising their own personal experiences...this option bridges the gulf by means of projecting the researcher's own experiences onto the other' (1999, 9). The implication of the

reflexive approach is that researchers are part of the field of study. I discuss reflexivity more fully in sub-section 2.8.4 and share some of my experiences of using this approach.

Collins links debates within the discipline of anthropology about 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity' and the 'insider/outsider' status of researchers (2002, 78). Collins suggests that legitimacy for the establishment of anthropology in the early period was sought by anthropologists through stressing its 'scientific' approach; the aim was to promote 'objectivity' by creating distance between anthropologists and their 'subjects' so avoiding the possibility of unintended 'subjectivity' (2002, 78). Commenting that maintaining an 'insider/outsider' distinction is both problematic and unhelpful Collins argues that: 'During the 1960s, anthropologists began to see the relationship between the terms 'insider' and 'outsider' as more of a continuum'. This was connected to the realisation that there was no purely 'objective' outsider position (2002, 78). Collins adds that it is more realistic to view the researcher as being situated between the two positions and that the 'insider/outsider' binary is a concept that is socially constructed (2002, 79).

Eleanor Nesbitt, in her work about Quaker ethnographers, also supports the view that there is a false distinction between insider and outsider, suggesting that:

When field workers define themselves as insiders or outsiders, this does not always reflect the more complex reality of identity and belonging... Distances – geographical, social and generational – between individuals and clusters of individuals complicate talk of insider and outsider (2002, 135).

Collins is critical of Merton's (1972) perspective that membership of a group confers insider status, arguing that it depends on the definition of membership (2002, 87).

Collins suggests that 'one's membership of a group, that is one's status as

insider/outsider is, to a large extent, an intricate process of negotiation'; suggesting that this process is complex and not just dependent on the person's sense of belonging but on the perceptions of others in the group (2002, 87). McCutcheon also challenges the premise that there are fixed insider/outsider positions and viewpoints and asserts that it is essential to question how these roles are constructed, which 'insider' viewpoints are given authority and the implications if group members in the study disagree with the findings of the research (2007, 53). However, Daniel Goleman's work about the psychology of perception (1998) presents an alternative assessment of the insider/outsider distinction. Goleman refers to an observation by the sociologist Georg Simmel (1917) that a group outsider or stranger can bring a view that is unfamiliar to the group and therefore a more 'objective' viewpoint; the outsider understands the groups' schemas but is not committed to them (1998, 239). Goleman goes on to assert that this 'objectivity' 'is not simple detachment, but a combination of indifference and involvement, intimacy and distance' (1998, 239).

Dandelion outlines four types of insider research: the first two categories undertaken by a member of the group in the study (overtly or covertly), and the second two categories by someone who is not part of the study group but is a member of the wider organisation also using overt or covert methods (1996, 37). Dandelion suggests that as the research progresses the position of the researcher may change and many ethical issues have to be considered (1996, 38). Dandelion argues that there are a number of advantages to being an insider researcher, for example, access to the group. In the case of his membership of BYM, Dandelion had the right to attend business meetings and was a member of various committees; there was familiarity with the group and 'insider' knowledge and the likelihood that an insider

researcher would be trusted (1996, 39-41). Conversely, Dandelion points to potential disadvantages of being an insider, including too much prior knowledge of the group and therefore a lack of analytical distance; the researcher's impact on the study also known as the 'halo effect', being too immersed in the field and possible confusion about their role-identity for the insider-researcher (1996, 41-43). Jodie Taylor also points to the difficulty that an insider might have, especially within a friendship group, about revealing some of their more negative observations from their research, because of their emotional connection to others in the group and the risk of personal rejection or damage to group cohesion (2011, 14). Taylor contends that:

To guide us in our research, we must equally value and rely upon our strength of character, goodwill, our gut instincts and emotional intelligence as we do our formal training (2011, 18).

My status as researcher during this study was rather complex. According to Dandelion's typology, I was in the third category of insider, as a Quaker overtly researching a different group of Friends than mine. However, at times I felt like both an insider and an outsider to the group, depending on the circumstances. The factors that reinforced my 'outsiderness' included the following: I am not a member of IYM and therefore had to ask permission to attend Irish Quaker gatherings. Although there were many Quaker rituals and references that seemed familiar some aspects of Irish Quakerism were very different, for example, I am a Quaker by 'convincement' and theologically IYM has both evangelical and liberal Friends, but overall is much more Christo-centric than the form of Quakerism which I was familiar within BYM (this was discussed in chapter one). When I met Irish Friends it was evident at times that I was being 'checked out'. It was interesting how they picked up on my second name (Kennedy indicated my Irish roots), how I talked about places in Northern Ireland (for

example, Derry or Londonderry), some people spotted my Claddagh ring²⁴ and others were interested in what my motivation was for the research. I realised later that this may have mirrored the responses of people who have lived through a period of conflict when it is important to know what the background and identities are of the people they meet. This form of 'checking' has been described by Finlay as related to 'the cultural protocols governing communication between strangers' (2001, 56). My response was to be honest about my own background and motivation but to hold back saying too much about my political or theological views. However, as I attended more Irish Quaker events as a participant observer the sense of being an insider, on those occasions, increased.

In terms of my understanding of different cultural identities and my status as insider or outsider, a comparison can be made between my fieldwork visits to Ireland – a country which seems so familiar to me because of strong family connections – with a holiday I spent visiting friends in Thailand in 2014. I experienced a much stronger sense of being an outsider in Thailand. It appeared to be a very different culture than my own – the smells, colours, sights and sounds seemed so unfamiliar. I was conscious of being a European in an Asian country; there was a term for us in Thai – 'farang' which seemed to emphasise the differences between non-Thais and the local population in a number of ways, for example, there were often higher entrance fees for non-Thai visitors to see important buildings. I observed that Buddhism and the monarchy appeared to be very important elements of Thai culture. There appeared to be less separation between religion and the secular world than in Britain. I also

²⁴ A ring associated with Ireland which symbolises love, loyalty and friendship.

observed that the emphasis seemed to be on the social bonds and obligations of family and friendship rather than individual autonomy and freedoms.

Reflecting on this experience of Thai culture I concluded that a key factor in my response was how my preconceptions and 'mental framing' of what I observed impacted on my perceptions; this included a tendency to compare and contrast what was familiar from my own culture with what seemed very different about Thai culture. This is something Collins refers to, arguing that another way of expressing the insider/outsider distinction is that of similarity and difference and that there is a tendency to perceive others through the prism of contrast in the context of a research study (2002, 81). In addition, I had limited contact with Thai society and did not speak the language – some of my experiences were mediated by our friends and related to what they wanted us to know about and a desire to create a favourable impression of their country.

I was left with the question of how best to describe what constituted the essence of Thai culture – a culture which I was told by my hosts is itself a fusion of different influences from surrounding countries. This concept can be related to whether it is possible to identify an Irish Quaker essence which continues to exist despite changes in the Society of Friends. Towards the end of the study I had a sense that containment of diversity was a key element of the Quaker essence/identity but perhaps not a very stable one. This subject is explored more fully in chapter seven in the research findings. In terms of how these observations relate to my fieldwork in Ireland, although Ireland feels very familiar compared to Thailand, this was not the

case with Irish Quakerism. Nevertheless, I was able pick up on some of the subtle nuances of Quakerism in Ireland and compare these with other Quaker groups.

2.8.2. Negotiating my own insider/outsiderness

Davis (1973), quoted in Lofland et al discusses the need to be a 'Martian' and a 'convert' when undertaking qualitative research, finding ways to negotiate closeness and distance – to be drawn in and yet be able to see and observe things with 'fresh eyes' (2006, 22). Lofland et al add that if the researcher is a member of the group they will need to find ways of negotiating distance; if an outsider the opposite is necessary (2006, 22-23). The many fieldwork visits I made to the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland led to a number of challenges related to my status as a researcher. For example, I met the same people many times and felt that in another context we could become friends. I noticed being drawn into debates going on within IYM and saw the danger of being perceived to take sides. I felt emotionally affected by the talk about conflict and division in the Yearly Meeting. I had agreed to give feedback about my observations, particularly regarding the unity of IYM, a subject of great sensitivity. I was aware that some Friends wanted to tell me things possibly because they felt silenced by certain conventions in the Yearly Meeting that I go on to explore in chapter six. I also had my own comfortable certainties as a liberal Quaker shaken up by meeting Friends with very different theological perspectives to mine. Nesbitt also addresses some of the tensions inherent in being a Quaker researcher among other Quakers, for example, during Meeting for Worship when the event is 'data'; how to decide whether to participate as a Quaker or a researcher (2002, 143). Extracts from my research journals that illustrate some of the points made above are in appendix 3.

To summarise, negotiating my status as a researcher was challenging but it became easier as I gained experience of managing being both an insider and an outsider to the group. At all times I was open about why I was attending various Quaker events and found ways to fully participate, and then to create distance when necessary, in order to reflect on my experiences and observations.

2.8.3. Personal impact of the study

In this section I continue to explore what the research meant to me personally. The first major piece of written work I undertook at the beginning of the study was to write a background paper on the origins of the 'Troubles'. I felt emotionally troubled by some of the material that I read. For example, reading about the IRA bombing campaign triggered memories of being trapped on the London underground during security alerts in the 1980s. The outcome of the 'Bloody Sunday' Inquiry was published towards the end of the time that I was completing the paper.²⁵ I remembered seeing the iconic photograph taken of the Catholic priest, Father Edward Daly, waving a white handkerchief to enable an injured protestor to be moved to a safe place and my feelings of shock and horror at what had happened. I felt a strong desire to finish the 'Troubles' paper on a positive note, rather than end with the Omagh bombing in August 1998 or subsequent murders carried out by dissident IRA groups.²⁶ I therefore decided to extend the time period of the paper to 2007 when the Northern Ireland Assembly was restored and finished this section with a rather bland statement that, 'the Agreement did not end the violence completely, but it is hoped that the worst of the 'Troubles' are now over'.

²⁵ Lord Saville's report was published on the 15 June 2010. The events of 'Bloody Sunday' are discussed in chapter three.

²⁶ I visited Omagh in 2001 and was moved by the many memorials to the dead in the town.

It was very hard to describe the build up to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, because of its complexity. I wanted to write more about the contribution of grassroots organisations and individual activists and not concentrate so much on political parties and politicians, but I needed to finish writing the paper. In fact, the dilemma of deciding what to include and what to leave out was in itself very challenging. I recognised that the conflict in Northern Ireland is very difficult to write about as a mainly historical event – it is very recent; it is too early to know if the constitutional settlement has completely succeeded; there are concerns about dissident groups and a return to paramilitary violence and hurt and suspicion remain because of the impact the ‘Troubles’ had on people’s lives.

Reflecting back over the last six years, this study has challenged the way I think about my own identity. I have come to realise that identity is not primarily a list of categories or roles. I have seen the importance of what aspects of our identity we give significance to and why. I have learnt about transcendence and wearing my identity categories more lightly. I now feel more comfortable with my Britishness and have a British and Irish passport – like one of the respondents said ‘I have two identities here and they’re both important to me and I don’t want to deny either of them’. I have attended many family funerals in Ireland in recent years and can see the comfort that Catholic rituals bring and the benefits of being part of a cultural community; my impression is that it is as much about a sense of belonging as about belief and faith. I have also been affected by the experience of hearing evangelical Friends in Ireland talk about the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus and what it meant to them. I was privileged to gain an insight into this aspect of

Christian belief and realised how powerful the role of emotion and connection can be in our spiritual lives.

2.8.4. The application of reflexivity

Slee outlines how reflexivity as a methodological tool developed during the early 1970s when feminist academics began to challenge the norms of traditional male academic research in the social sciences (2004, 43-44). A feminist approach to social research argued that 'what was needed was the creation of an entirely new paradigm', one that was non-hierarchical and participatory which focused on the social context of research methods and factors such as intimacy, rapport and power dynamics between respondents and researchers (Slee 2004, 44). Slee argues that a reflexive approach means that it is necessary for researchers to 'interrogate' their own subjective beliefs, behaviours and positions as well as the interview data. It involves transparency about the research process and decisions made by the researcher at all stages of the study (2004, 51-52). Closely associated with reflexivity is research ethics. In section 2.9 I discuss the contribution of feminist researchers to the debate about ethical issues in social research. Andrew Findlay also suggests that reflexivity it is an effective research tool if used critically with analytical accountability. Findlay argues the case for self-awareness about emotions that are triggered by the study; rather than try to push away feelings of dissonance he asserts that much can be gained for the research by exploring the broader context of the study which produced these feelings, our personal reactions and positioning (2001, 71).

I adopted a reflexive approach in the early stages of the study because I had read literature about this subject and it appealed to my reflective nature. I decided that the

application of feminist concepts about reflexivity could work well in other types of research not just studies about women's lives. Rather than aiming for 'cool detachment' which is inappropriate for a study such as mine using qualitative methods. I sought to develop awareness of my feelings and biases and to use research journals as a tool for reflection. I was aware of my sympathies towards the Irish nationalist perspective because of my Irish Catholic roots and political views. When reading about the conflict, I concentrated on gaining a more 'rounded' view of the 'Troubles'. In particular, I made a conscious effort to find out about the perspectives of the unionist/loyalist community, to understand strands of anti-Catholicism within Unionism, the historical and political background of the unionist community and their identity as British citizens. How I navigated the issue of historical 'balance' was explored in section 1.5.

Although I managed to present a fairly balanced account of the origins of the conflict in my written work, I found this much more difficult when giving verbal presentations about my research in the early stages. Feedback from workshop participants indicated that I tended to present a much more favourable account of the nationalist perspective compared to the unionist one. After I presented my work at a Research Summer School in 2010 and received useful feedback from participants and my supervisor, I achieved a greater balance in the way I presented and analysed secondary sources. This experience and feedback from other presentations I have given about my work increased my ability to create an objective distance as opposed to an unhelpful detachment. Findlay cautions against ignoring one's own reflexivity and asserts that this had led on occasions to a lack of engagement with the subjective and emotional aspects of the 'Troubles' (2001, 59).

Doing this research in a balanced way meant that I also needed to shift my perceptions of Northern Ireland Protestantism and Ulster Unionism, in particular, during my fieldwork. It was a challenge to have visited Stormont (location of the Northern Ireland Assembly) because of the many symbols of British imperialism, for example, statues of Sir Edward Carson and Lord Craigavon (their roles are explained in chapter three). I also noticed plaques on the wall of the building's interior commemorating unionist politicians killed by republican 'terrorists' and armed police at the entrance. I was disturbed by the Union Jacks and Loyalist paramilitary flags in Portadown (field notes 2010).

Developing a reflexive practice meant that when I interviewed Quakers with a range of political and theological views, I had greater awareness of my reactions to the feelings and views that respondents shared with me and focused on my primary aim which was to encourage the interviewees to openly share their perspectives.

Reflexivity can and does work both ways. Collins asserts that 'Both Quakers and anthropologists are given to observation, reflection and discussion' and this can result in Friends unconsciously assuming the role of ethnographer in relationship to their own group (2002, 90). I had the sense that the people I interviewed were also engaging in the practice of reflexivity and therefore moving in and out of different positions in terms of where they were situated in the study, as subjects such as the potential benefits and drawbacks of the research for IYM were raised by some of the respondents.

In terms of the personal implications of using a reflexive approach and qualitative methodology generally, it involved a great deal of energy and self-awareness to

navigate the different roles that I found myself in. It was very helpful to have had a 'research friend' during the fieldwork stage to talk about issues such as personal boundaries. It took a considerable amount of time to go through my research journals and select particular observations then make decisions about which were appropriate to refer to in the thesis. It was difficult holding together the emotional aspects of the study while simultaneously maintaining the academic rigour required for a PhD thesis. However, I would contend that a reflexive approach coupled with sensitivity to the material has brought depth and vibrancy to the study.

2.8.5. Section summary

In this section I discussed my role as a reflexive researcher. I focused specifically on debates about the 'insider/outsider problem', and examined where I was positioned within the study. I discussed the personal impact of the research, gave some examples of how I navigated some of the challenges I encountered and outlined what a reflexive approach contributed to the study.

2.9. Ethical issues

Kvale contends that an ethical approach to research should play a central role at all stages of a research study (2007, 24). Kvale argues that a research project can be divided into the seven stages and gives guidance about what needs to happen at each stage: the purpose of the study should make a contribution to the 'greater good'; the design stage needs to consider informed consent, confidentiality and the possible impact of participation in the study on respondents; minimise possible stress caused to respondents when planning interviews; transcription should incorporate methods to preserve confidentiality and accuracy of the oral and written records;

clarity in analysis of the data and the role of respondents in challenging or correcting the researchers' interpretations; verification of the data and finally publication of the findings and the impact this might have on respondents (2007, 24). Slee emphasises the use of non-oppressive research methods which are based on the principles discussed in the section on reflexivity. Examples include transparency about the aims of the study, negotiating ownership of the data, maintaining confidentiality and staying in touch with respondents about the progress of the research and its findings (2004, 50).

Marie Smyth's insights about the ethical considerations of researching violently divided societies proved to be very useful when I was designing the research study (2001). Smyth stressed the need to take into account the potential psychological risk to participants of involvement in the research, researcher safety, maintaining confidentiality, ensuring informed consent and legal constraints relating to information which may be shared by participants (2001, 5-6). In addition, Smyth refers to the difficulty of exploring the context to the conflict in Northern Ireland in a balanced way because of the multiple explanations and contexts related to the political outlook of the divided communities (2001, 7). Smyth advocates the involvement of people who are part of the research study in guiding the research, suggesting that 'democratisation of the management and process of research is a means of achieving greater accountability and improving the quality of the work itself' (2001, 11).

2.9.1. How I sought to be an ethical researcher

There were a number of measures that I took to increase my potential to be an ethical researcher, for example, in the initial stages of the research I met two people who had experience and knowledge of sectarianism in Ireland, and also Irish Quakerism, to talk through some of the ethical considerations related to the study. I took their observations into account and revised the scope of the research to avoid asking about certain issues related to the 'Troubles' that remained sensitive. It was helpful to have discussed some of the potential difficulties/risks of interviewing people who may be identifiable despite efforts to ensure anonymity. This difficulty relates to the small number of people involved in the research and Irish memory of past hurts (in both the nationalist and unionist communities and within IYM). Two main dangers were suggested: that an individual grudge may be re-triggered – this was thought to be more likely than a dissident paramilitary response, and the re-awakening of past hurt or guilt related to the 'Troubles'. We talked about how to handle these difficulties. It was suggested that I be very careful about what I say to people I met about contact with other Irish Quakers. In addition, instead of offering a copy of the transcribed interview, if direct quotations were going to be included in the thesis I agreed to send them to the respondents first to ask their permission for the quotes to be used. The meeting was very helpful and clarified the direction of the research. As the focus of the research became more about identity rather than the 'Troubles' it became apparent that maintaining confidentiality was going to be a major challenge rather than risk of physical harm to the respondents.

During the stage when I was applying for ethical approval for the study I read a number of codes of practice including the Statement of Ethical Practice for the British

Sociological Association (Britsoc 2002), the British Psychological Society's Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants (BPS 2007), and Respect Code of Practice for Socio-Economic Research (Respect 2004). I decided to record some of my observations about the British Psychological Society's code to see what would be helpful for my application to the university ethics panel. For example, there was a positive opening paragraph making a significant point about the use of language in research and the difference in status between participant and subject. However, I felt that some of the guidance was rather woolly and some specific examples might have helped to clarify issues such as obtaining consent where there were possible negative consequences of the research. The code stated that:

If harm, unusual discomfort, or other negative consequences for the individual's future life might occur, the investigator must obtain the disinterested approval of independent advisors, inform the participants, and obtain informed, real consent from each of them (BPS Ethical Principles 2007, 3).

As well as the difficulty in ensuring participants' full understanding of the implications of involvement in a research study and in predicting some of the possible negative consequences for them (Homan 1991, 74), it could be argued that the code does not put enough emphasis on this being a shared exploration between respondents and researchers.

Arguing from a feminist perspective Maxine Birch et al suggest that:

The tick box approach to ethical standards, outlined by general research texts (Robson, 1993; Sarantakos, 1998), as a means of ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, reliability and validity, represent ethics as an abstracted consideration. Whilst we do not argue that certain universal criteria to guide behaviour are irrelevant, or that general codes can be helpful, the constant neglect of detailed ethical discussions in all stages of research projects renders the enterprise open to being unethical (2002, 5).

The implication of Birch et al's assertions is the importance of not over-relying on ethical guidelines and to consider the specific context of each research project. Furthermore, Rosaline Edwards and Melanie Mauthner argue that there is an overlap between the skills-based (so called virtue) approach to ethics in research and the feminist value-based model in that: 'Both stress context and situation rather than abstract principles, and dialogue and negotiation rather than rules and autonomy'. However, they assert that the skills approach tends to stress 'neutrality' in decision-making about ethical issues and the value-based approach accepts that 'partiality' is necessary when taking into account the role of power relations and emotion, and the impact on participant, researcher and the research process (2002, 21). In drawing on the value-based model of research ethics I was guided by respondents and we worked out together how to manage the ethical dimension of the study. Examples of this approach are given in sections 2.9.2 and 2.9.3.

I found completing the application for ethical approval very useful and it enabled me to incorporate the ideas gained from talking to my advisors and reading about the subject, and to be much clearer about how to identify and minimise potential risks to all involved in the research (see appendix 4 for the risk assessment and management plan). Many of these concerns about risk related to the 'Troubles' became redundant when the focus of the research changed.

The next sections consider some of the challenges that arise in social research that can undermine a consistently ethical approach such as manipulation of respondents and ensuring confidentiality and how I responded to these issues.

2.9.2. Manipulation

Roger Homan states that the principle of informed consent is based on the right of participants to give or withdraw their agreement to be part of a research study having been given appropriate information about the nature and purpose of the study (1991, 69). However, as Dandelion asserts, it is difficult to avoid manipulation of respondents if the researcher is an insider and they have a sense of how to encourage agreement to participate in a research project; that it is particularly difficult to maintain informed consent when the focus of the research changes and hard to keep everyone updated about a change of direction (1998, 47-48). This happened during my study when it became evident that despite sending out the revised participant information letters explaining the change in focus of the research some of the respondents thought that the study was still about Quaker responses to the 'Troubles'. There were some negative reactions to my interest in Quakers and sectarianism and initial finding that some Friends did not regard themselves as Protestant. I responded to this issue by being open about why I had changed direction but also clarified that aspects of the original scope of the research remained such as the practical responses of Friends during the period of the 'Troubles'.

In addition, I followed recommendations in the literature, for example, (Kvale) that there be a written agreement between the respondents and researchers about issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and what happens to the data. Kvale argues that this serves to clarify the purpose of the interview (2007, 27). I took these principles into account before each interview and clarified the agreement to check that the respondents understood what they were consenting to and we talked through issues related to confidentiality, the data management plan and the option they had

to see the quotes that I would eventually select for the thesis and give permission for their selection. Participants also had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason (see appendix 5 and 6 for the information sheet and consent form). During the interviews I maintained awareness of respondents' body language and was alert for signs that certain lines of enquiry might have caused stress. I kept in mind that this was a shared responsibility and that many of the respondents were very experienced at managing personal boundaries and some had previously been interviewed in other research studies.

2.9.3. Confidentiality

When I started the interviews I noted in my research journal that I found it very difficult not to mention the other people that I had talked to before starting the fieldwork stage, as everybody seemed to know each other; the world of Irish Quakerism is very small (research journal 2010). In terms of preserving the confidentiality of interview respondents, on the consent form I produced for the study there was a section asking respondents to choose whether or not they were willing to be identified and they were asked to select from one of these two options. The responses to this question were mixed – some agreed that they could be named, some were very definite that they did not want to be named and a third group said that they would decide only after they had seen the quotations that I had selected. A number of respondents were very concerned that they might be identified even if they were not named and we spent a considerable time talking about this subject. I understood that this worry was mainly related to them sharing viewpoints about sensitive and contentious subjects and the subsequent risk of harming relationships within IYM.

I added an additional option to the form for those respondents who wanted to see the quotations first before deciding about the naming issue and also recorded the decisions that had been made. For example, at the beginning of one interview – before the DVR was switched on – there was a long discussion about confidentiality initiated by the respondent. When I started recording the interview I summarised what had been agreed both to check my understanding was correct and also to keep a record of the agreement. This short extract from an interview transcript illustrates this point:

MK: Thank you for agreeing to meet me. We're just going to reiterate the point about confidentiality. Please correct me if I'm wrong. When I've finished with the transcript and taken out the bits of the interview that seem most useful to my thesis, I will send them to you in about four years' time. I'll ask you to check through and make sure you're absolutely happy. If there's anything you want removed because of the sensitivity we talked about [regarding] the information, you have the right to do that and I promise you I will take it out. The actual transcripts and recordings will be archived at Friends House under the 50 year rule. So nobody else will have access to the material after I've finished. Is that correct [my understanding of what was agreed]?

Respondent: That's fine, yes

Because of the deep level of concern that had been expressed about confidentiality and for the sake of consistency, I eventually decided to make all of the interview respondents anonymous rather than name some and not others. I asked permission to name people in particular roles in IYM and the wider Quaker movement who had given me information that was not particularly sensitive. In terms of ownership of the interview data, having said that I would send quotations from the interviews to the respondents for permission to use them in the thesis, I also included the following statement in the letter to respondents:

I will correct any factual inaccuracies that you notice but I will not change material that is based on my interpretation of the interview (participant information letter 28 August 2012).

The outcome of the correspondence I had with respondents after I sent them the quotations in the latter part of 2015 validated the approach that I had taken. Although a small number gave me unconditional permission to use their quotes, others expressed reservations, for example, about being inadvertently identified; that there were some factual inaccuracies; that some of the quotations were not very coherent or were more critical than they had meant them to be. However, through a process of discussion, mainly by email, all of these issues were sorted out and agreement was reached about the quotations to be included in the thesis. I corrected factual inaccuracies and removed details that could be used to identify the person, especially if they were referring to sensitive subjects. In one case the respondent and I decided to paraphrase a quote to address their concerns about being identified. I was also deliberately vague about locations and dates in the examples I gave in the section about participant observation (2.6) for the same reason.

What I learnt from doing this research is the importance of not relying solely on ethical codes and the literature about ethics in research. Even though there may be thorough planning and completion of risk assessments, doing fieldwork is a step into the unknown and researchers need to trust their own judgement and be forgiving of themselves if despite their best intentions they occasionally get things wrong. Reflecting on my experiences and feelings about the study through journaling and being part of a supportive research community was very helpful in finding a way through the ethical challenges discussed in 2.9. I enjoyed reconnecting with the

people the research was about towards the end of the study. It highlighted the person-centred nature of qualitative research.

2.10. Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined the use of qualitative research methodology for the study; justified the use of interviews as the main research method and examined how I took relevant theoretical perspectives in the literature related to the design of the interview guide, approaches to interviewing and interview transcription. Another core theme of this chapter was my role as a reflexive researcher. I gave examples of how I took subjectivity into account in terms of analysing my responses to the fieldwork. I considered the nature of insider/outsider research and my positioning within the study. Finally, I set out some of the core principles of my aspiration to be an ethical researcher; how I took these principles into account and some of the challenges related to my intention to act with integrity and in partnership with respondents and also to achieve the aims of the study in terms of identifying new and significant findings about Irish Quaker identity and complex identity management by the Religious Society of Friends.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECTARIANISM IN IRELAND

3.1. Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the origins of sectarianism, sectarian-related conflict and its impact on the formation of religious and national identity in Ireland. The chapter contextualises my assertions about the legacy of sectarianism, its impact on the identity of Friends and the development of a model of complex identity management which is explored in chapters five and six.

I start by tracing the historical roots of sectarianism from the colonial period through to the formation and development of the two Irish states in 1922 (3.2), briefly sketching the main concerns and priorities of the new political entities (3.3 and 3.3.1). The next section explores the most recent episode of violent sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland known as the 'Troubles' starting in the late 1960s (3.4). Some of the main triggers and explanations for the origins of the conflict are outlined and analysed, as are the factors contributing to its duration and intensity. This section concludes by outlining the events leading to the eventual political settlement of 1998 (3.4.3). I then go on to discuss the nature and impact of Irish sectarianism. I conclude the chapter by exploring the role of religion in the conflict through the work of Bruce (2009), Elliott (2009), Ganiel and Dixon (2008) and others (3.5).

3.2. Historical roots of sectarianism

In chapter one the issue of historical 'balance' was explored and the approach I used to fairly represent the narratives and perspectives of both traditions in Ireland. What follows is an outline of the main historical events and milestones that I argue have

helped to shape the nature of sectarianism. I start with the colonial period because this signifies the beginning of the Anglo-Irish connection which is a common thread in the historical narrative through to the present time.

The colonial period in Ireland began with the Anglo-Norman conquest of the country in 1169 when Henry II's knights captured Waterford, Wexford and eventually Dublin. According to Tim Pat Coogan,²⁷ for nationalists in Ireland this event marks the beginning of 'eight hundred years of British oppression' (1995, 3). During the next four centuries attempts were made by successive English monarchs to extend control over the rest of Ireland. By the end of the Elizabethan period much of the country had been conquered with the exception of Ulster which was more difficult to subdue (Coohill 2008, 20).

A key period in terms of the consolidation of English rule dates from 1609 and is known as the 'Plantation of Ulster' (Darby 1995, 3). Anglican and Presbyterian colonists from England and Scotland were encouraged to settle in Ulster and were given large tracts of land. In return they were required to bring Protestant tenants as farm workers (Coohill 2008, 21). The new landowners introduced their own form of agriculture and settlements and Joseph Coohill argues that these changes drove a further wedge between the native Irish and the newcomers (2008, 21-22). According to Nicholas Frayling, many of them were forced off their land into destitution and starvation. Economic and social divisions between the native Irish and new settlers were compounded by the religious divide and the negative stereotypes of the Irish prevalent in English society at the time (1996, 141).

27 Tim Pat Coogan has a background in journalism and writes about Irish history from a distinctively nationalist perspective. I have included references to Coogan's work, despite the potential bias inherent in this source, because they illustrate an important strand of thinking in popular discourse about the link between sectarianism and colonialism in Ireland.

Liechty and Clegg argue that these divisions were also reinforced by the powerful position of the Church of Ireland which was the Established Church until 1870 (2001, 71). According to Alan Ford, by the beginning of the seventeenth century the Church of Ireland had begun to develop a more distinctive theological identity under the leadership of English and Scottish clergy reinforced by the foundation of the Protestant Trinity College, Dublin (1995, 169). Within the Church of Ireland there were disparate views about the constitutional status of the Church and its relationship to the Church of England – as subordinate or equal (Ford 1995, 178). Philomena Kilroy argues that the role of the Established Church in Ireland was very different to that of England, because despite its pivotal position in relation to the state, it was responsible for the minority ‘colonial community as it expanded’ in a country where the majority of the population were Roman Catholic (1994, 4). Ford asserts that despite the Church of Ireland’s desire for autonomy:

...ultimately the link with England, and the authority of the English parliament and church, was an essential bulwark in times of crisis and threat, whether in 1641, 1689 or 1798 (1995, 189).

The settlement of nonconformists during the plantation period, added another layer of religious complexity in Ireland because as Liechty and Clegg assert:

...the state-established Church of Ireland, the Catholic Church, and eventually the Presbyterian Church were each closely linked with a particular political option, and these were locked in a bitter struggle for ascendancy (2001, 67).

Marianne Elliott suggests that by the eighteenth century the penal laws established the link between political loyalty and the Established Church with the exclusion of Catholics and Dissenters from public office and certain professions. The outcome was that the Church of Ireland and its members were privileged in Irish society (2009, 96). Elliot argues that although the term ‘Protestant ascendancy’ is generally

understood to mean 'the monopoly of propertied Protestants of Irish political life in the eighteenth century'. It was also seen at the time as representing the dominant position of all Protestants in Irish society not just the elite (2009, 111).

Another significant event in terms of the entrenchment of political sectarianism was the 1798 Rebellion. This was a failed attempt by Catholic and Protestant nationalists, known as the 'United Irishmen', under the leadership of the Protestant reformer, Theobald Wolfe Tone, to stage an armed insurrection against British colonial rule in Ireland with the support of French naval forces (Coohill 2008, 32). Mitchell suggests that the participation of Presbyterians in this event was a rare example of the involvement of Dissenters in a nationalist cause, suggesting that 'historically, the dominant trend has been for Protestant Churches to rally behind the unionist political mainstream' (2006, 48). However, Peter Berresford Ellis argues that at this point Nationalism was still a political force rather than exclusively associated with Catholicism (2004, 6). The British government responded to the Rebellion by passing an Act of Union in 1801 bringing Ireland under direct rule from Westminster and the Irish parliament which met in Dublin was abolished (Darby 1995, 4). Berresford Ellis suggests that in the period after 1798 most of the penal laws against Dissenters were removed to shore up support for English colonial rule in Ireland (2004, 6). However, the requirement to pay tithes only ended with the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869 (Smith 2001, 560).

During the time of what became known as the 'Great Famine' 1845-52,²⁸ the British government and what Ó hEithir describes as 'proselytising Protestants' (1989, 41),

28 In 1845 blight destroyed most of the potato harvest in the south-east of the country. By 1847 the blight had spread throughout Ireland and almost the whole crop was destroyed (Frayling 1996, 146).

set up relief schemes in return for work.²⁹ Coohill, and Liechty and Clegg, observe that there is a prevailing narrative in nationalist history about 'souperism'.³⁰ They cite this as an example of the meaning ascribed to this approach to relief distribution being more significant than accurate 'facts' about the numbers of forced conversions (2008, 67 and 2001, 89-90). There is more general agreement however, about the devastating impact of the famine on the population of Ireland. For example, Coohill points to a broad consensus that over a million people died of starvation and disease and that more than a million emigrated in order to escape the crisis (2008, 59).

Frayling adds that the population had halved by the end of the 1800s (1996, 147).

Coohill argues that the political impact of the famine was profound and far reaching. Some Irish people who emigrated to North America and Australia during this time connected with Republican networks which raised funds and provided weapons for future Republican insurrections in Ireland. Coohill asserts that the British government's response to the famine also added to the bitter folk memories about colonial rule in Ireland (2008, 72-73). Roy Foster refers to this as '...the export of a race-memory of horror' (1992, 167). Coohill suggests that the famine also had a negative impact on relationships between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland; it was regarded by both communities as mainly affecting Catholics, who saw themselves as victims of British policy and those Protestants who felt they were spared by divine providence because they were not Catholic (2008, 74). The differential impact of the famine resulted in an increase in sectarian divisions between the communities in Belfast and other areas of the north-east, where a number of Catholics and

29 However, there were exceptions to this approach. Quakers in Ireland had a reputation for providing unconditional relief during the 'Great Famine' (Coohill 2008, 67).

30 'Souperism', also known as 'taking the soup', refers to a practice, by some evangelical Protestant groups, which required famine victims to convert to Protestantism in exchange for food, mainly soup (Liechty and Clegg 2001, 89-90).

Protestants had moved to escape death and disease during the famine years (Coohill 2008, 74).

In the 1870s Irish nationalists campaigned vigorously for a restoration of Home Rule for Ireland. In the British parliament the prime minister, W. E. Gladstone, attempted on two occasions to introduce a Home Rule Bill in order to resolve the 'Irish question'. On the third attempt in 1912, Gladstone was successful but due to the outbreak of the First World War, the passage of the bill into law was deferred (McKittrick and McVea³¹ 2001, 3). Ulster unionists were angry about the possibility of loosening their ties with Britain and regarded the Home Rule campaign as a way of establishing a Catholic ascendancy in Ireland (Elliott 2009, 140). The Unionist leader, Edward Carson, formed a militia called the 'Ulster Volunteer Force' in 1913 to defend Ulster if Home Rule was implemented. According to Berresford Ellis, the campaign slogan, 'Home Rule is Rome Rule', demonstrated the sectarian nature of the anti-Home Rule campaign (2004, 205).

Although movements such as the Home Rule campaign sought independence by parliamentary means, other organisations such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) were committed to the use of armed force (Darby 1995, 4). The IRB staged an armed insurrection in Dublin in 1916 which came to be known as 'the Easter

³¹ As outlined in chapter one, in order to achieve greater historical 'balance' when discussing the development of sectarianism in Ireland, I consulted a range of authoritative sources in the literature review that reflected the perspectives of the two main communities in conflict, including the Conflict Archive on the Internet site (CAIN) and also academic texts by historians such as Bew (2009), Foster (1992) and Hennessey (2005). I also drew on journalistic sources such as McKittrick and McVea because, despite the potential for lack of academic rigour in these sources, their discussion of the development of the 'Troubles' chimed with other accounts, was based on close observation of the conflict and appeared to be even-handed.

Rising'.³² The Easter Rising led to unionist accusations that nationalists had taken advantage of Britain being at war to stage this insurrection, asserting that those involved in the Rising were traitors (Coohill 2008, 126). However, according to Coohill, the reaction of the British authorities in executing fifteen of the leaders of the Rising and imprisoning many more in English jails created more Irish martyrs and increased support for the Republican cause (2008, 127). Despite the failure of the Rising at the time, its commemoration subsequently became a seminal event in the Republican movement north and south of the border and a trigger point for sectarian violence, especially during the 'Troubles' (Wood 2009, 20). It can be argued that the Easter Rising is an example of what Tosh and Lang call a foundation myth – that is a distorted story about a significant event in a movement's history (2006, 5).

In 1919 the nationalist party in Ireland, Sinn Féin (SF), set up a parliament in Dublin called the Dáil Éireann and declared an all-Ireland Republic. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) began a series of attacks on the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) which triggered the Anglo-Irish war 1919-21 (Coohill 2008, 128). The British government had recognised that the imposition of Home Rule for the whole of Ireland on Ulster unionists would be very difficult to enforce and passed the Government of Ireland Act (1920). This legislation set out the intention to create two Irish states: the Irish Free State and the Province of Northern Ireland. There were to be two parliaments, one in Dublin and the other in Belfast. Each parliament was to have a measure of self-

³² The event known as the Easter Rising (because it started on Easter Monday 1916) was an armed insurrection against British rule organised by the Supreme Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a military organisation with strong links to Irish-American republicans (O'Connor 1989, 71). Republicans took over the General Post Office in Dublin where one of the leaders, Padraig Pearse, read out a Declaration from 'the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic' to the people of Ireland (O'Connor 1989, 81). According to Ulick O'Connor, the Rising was very badly organised, the leaders had conflicting views and strategies and the arms due to arrive from Germany were never delivered due to miscommunication (1989, 79).

government.³³ Although unionists in the north accepted the legislation, republicans in Ireland decided that they no longer wanted Home Rule but an independent Republic and the hostilities between the IRA and British forces continued (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 4).

A delegation of Irish representatives led by Michael Collins (Minister of Finance in the Dáil Éireann) came to London in 1921 to discuss a peace agreement. According to Coohill, with the threat of all-out war by Lloyd George, the Irish delegation reluctantly signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty which gave the Free State dominion or self-governing status within the British Commonwealth and set up a boundary commission to work out how the country was to be partitioned (2008, 129-130). The partition of Ireland eventually left twenty-six counties in the Irish Free State and the remaining six counties in the Province of Northern Ireland which functioned as a self-governing region of the United Kingdom (Berresford Ellis 2004, 7).³⁴

3.2.1. Section summary

The previous section outlined a historical narrative of Ireland from the twelfth century Anglo-Norman conquest and concluded with the creation of the two Irish states.

During this period there were a number of pivotal events that shaped the identity and political ideology of the nationalist and unionist communities. Ultimately, Ireland was partitioned to meet the competing demands of republicans on the island who wanted independence and unionists who had strong emotional and political ties to the British state. Some of the consequences of partition in terms of the further institutionalisation

³³ Kenneth Bloomfield adds that the Government of Ireland Act provided for two parliaments but also included provision for a Council of Ireland that eventually envisioned one parliament for the whole of Ireland; partition was not regarded as a permanent 'solution' at the time (2007, 6)

³⁴ Rather than incorporate the newly created state into the United Kingdom, the new political union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland became the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland' (Parekh 2000, 15).

of sectarianism are discussed in the next section.

3.3. The Irish Free State

Mary Daly highlights how politicised the adoption of the term 'Irish Free State' was at the time. In negotiating the Treaty for the partition of Ireland the British government had apparently preferred the term Southern Ireland for the new political entity. However, Sinn Féin delegates were successful in their insistence that the name reflected the autonomy of the new state, rather than its dominion status, and suggested the alternative name – the Irish Free State (2007, 74). Daly asserts that there was a period of contestation between British officials and Irish negotiators about the use of Ireland in official documents. Sinn Féin delegates wanted to stress the eventual aim of reunification of the country, rather than use the official term, the Irish Free State (2007, 74-75). In addition, Daly states that:

The Irish government had similar qualms about referring to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland because this title was seen as conferring official recognition on partition, and they preferred to describe Northern Ireland as the Six Counties or the North of Ireland (2007, 72-73).³⁵

The early years of the new Free State were dominated by conflict between republicans about the Anglo-Irish Treaty that had partitioned Ireland and the legitimacy of the Dáil Éireann for its role in ratifying the Treaty. Irish republicans were split between those for and against the Treaty and a civil war broke out in 1922. Ultimately the Free State army were successful and the war ended in 1923 (2008, Coohill 143-144). Coohill suggests that in order to allay the concerns of anti-Treaty republicans, William T. Cosgrave, the President of the executive council of the Irish Free State, introduced a cultural policy in the mid-1920s which made the Irish

35 In contemporary times there are still difficulties related to the partition era, for example, Sinn Féin MPs in Northern Ireland do not take their seats in the Westminster parliament because of their refusal to swear the oath of allegiance to the monarch (*New Statesman*, 2015).

language compulsory in elementary and secondary education, and in certain professions. Furthermore, the nationalist version of history was taught in schools (2008, 145). According to Coohill:

Much of this effort coincided with public opinion in the Free State, which increasingly saw Irishness as synonymous with rural life, an agricultural economy and the Catholic religion (2008, 145).

According to Elliott, in terms of the position of Protestants in the Irish Free State, approximately 100,000 of them left during this period because they felt in a vulnerable position. This meant that by 1926 only 7.4 percent of the total population was Protestant (2009, 216). Elliott further states that there was a denial by Irish nationalists that sectarianism formed an element of its make up or that there was a sectarian motive for the attacks on Protestants and their property (2009, 217).

According to Coohill, 'The 1930s and 1940s saw the assertion of final independence of the Irish Free State from any British connection'. This was achieved in three main ways: by an economic war with Britain, the political process by which the Free State developed into the Republic of Ireland and the decision to remain neutral during the Second World War (2008, 149). As part of the move towards independence the Irish Free State adopted a constitution in 1937 which changed the name of the state to Éire (Ireland) (Daly 2007, 76). Enshrined in the constitution was the protection of the special status of the Catholic Church in Irish society and the inclusion of clauses laying claim to the whole territory of Ireland. The legal system and social policy was adapted to reflect Catholic doctrine on issues such as abortion, contraception and divorce (Coohill, 151-152).

Some Protestants in the Republic of Ireland were unhappy about the influence of the Catholic Church. According to Hennessey, unionists in Northern Ireland feared that

any move towards a united Ireland would lead to 'Rome Rule', especially after the Irish Free State adopted their constitution (2005, 9). As one respondent said:

...and I understand the fear really of 'Home Rule is Rome rule' from the point of view of Protestants because Catholics being in the majority, the educational system has been dominated by Catholics and also the health system...

Another respondent commented that:

So there was that mentality that we mustn't let our young people mix with anybody, with Catholics, or they're gone to the Catholic Church, the children are gone to the Catholic Church and it [Protestantism] will diminish.

During the Second World War Northern Ireland ports were used by the allies as a base to protect convoys and as a staging post for the Normandy landings. According to Coogan, this explains why the British government felt a strong sense of obligation to Northern Ireland when in 1949 Éire left the Commonwealth and became the Republic of Ireland (1995, 24).

3.3.1. Northern Ireland

Elliott argues that the new Northern Ireland state was inherently unstable from its inception due to the sizable Catholic minority which was 34 per cent of the population and opposed to 'the new political situation' (2009, 216). In particular, people in counties Fermanagh and Tyrone which had a higher proportion of Catholics than the rest of Northern Ireland, wanted to remain part of the Irish Free State (Berresford Ellis 2004, 8). According to David McKittrick and David McVea, despite the boundaries of the new state being drawn to ensure a Protestant majority, there was ongoing insecurity within the Protestant community about the British government's long-term commitment to maintaining the Union (2001, 4).

McKittrick and McVea argue that the new parliament was dominated by the Unionist

party and that there was no incentive to protect and develop the interests of Catholics in Northern Ireland (2001, 6). This was particularly reflected in political representation, public housing allocation and access to higher education and employment (Coogan 1995, 26). One example of how the new state sought to promote the interests of the Protestant community was in local elections. Proportional representation was abolished in 1922 and the first past the post voting system was introduced: this disadvantaged Catholics who were in the minority. This, combined with the partisan redrawing of local authority boundaries (known as 'gerrymandering'), led to Derry passing from nationalist to unionist control despite a clear Catholic majority in the city (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 8). McKittrick and McVea argue that during the 1920s and 1930s the British government stood back from Northern Ireland leaving the Unionist party in control and that many Catholics refused to participate in the political process (2001, 9). Bloomfield argues that although the British government had the power to withhold or delay the Royal Assent from any legislation proposed by the Northern Ireland parliament, this was rarely enacted and this was the case when proportional representation was abolished (2007, 12).

Following the establishment of the Republic of Ireland, an Ireland Act (1949) was passed in Westminster which included a clause that there would be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the Northern Ireland parliament (Coogan 1995, 24). Coogan asserts that the principle of consent was crucial in terms of the lack of political and social progress for the Catholic minority, because it reinforced the power of the Unionist party to veto any change in the *status quo* (1995, 24). As Berresford Ellis argues, the partition of Ireland was therefore in

reality given permanent status (2004, 8).

3.3.2. Section summary

This section outlined the establishment of the two Irish states following the partition of Ireland. It traced the development of the Irish Free State from dominion status to an independent Republic. There was a focus on nation building in this era, including the central role of the Catholic Church, and the minority status of the Protestant community. Conversely, Northern Ireland had a large minority of Catholics after partition. However, the system of government established by the Unionist party meant that political power was mainly under the control of unionists resulting in structural inequality in Northern Irish society. There was little active intervention by the British government in Northern Irish affairs during this period as the two Irish states continued their separate development.

3.4. The 'Troubles'³⁶

The main aim of this section is to contextualise the experience of respondents who lived through the most recent period of violent conflict in Ireland known as the 'Troubles'. This protracted period of violent sectarian upheaval, at times spreading to the Republic of Ireland and towns and cities in England, began in the late 1960s in Northern Ireland. The 'Troubles' and the response of the authorities to the breakdown

³⁶ According to Melaugh and Lynn (2005), the term the 'Troubles' is a euphemism used by people in Ireland for the current conflict and it has been used before to describe other periods of Irish history. An example of the previous use of the term is given by O'Connor in his book *The Troubles: the Struggle for Irish Freedom 1912-1922*, which describes the period leading up to the partition of Ireland (1989). However, O'Connor does not explain why he uses the term the 'Troubles'. The most recent use of the expression refers to violent conflict in Ireland between 1968 and 1998. The violence mainly impacted on people living in Northern Ireland but also resulted in casualties in the Republic and mainland Britain. According to Clem McCartney (1999, 17), at the height of the 'Troubles' in 1972 a total of 467 people were killed including 321 civilians. Different statistics are quoted by other commentators for that year, for example, 497 deaths including 259 civilians (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 325). This discrepancy is likely to reflect the difficulty in accurately categorising 'Troubles'-related deaths and injuries.

of law and order impacted on people's lives in a number of ways, for example, these respondents spoke about their experience of contact with the security forces:

Well, it's interesting looking back at that time – it was a very militarized place. Walking into town you would have gone through one, two, three, four, possibly five army checkpoints. Most of the time – frisked down.

In 1970 I was placed in Bangor because that's where we were living. It's amazing to kind of try and describe it. It's like a world apart. Bangor is only 12, 14 miles from Belfast but it might as well have been two, three hundred miles from Belfast. Belfast was exploding into this kind of turmoil at that stage and yet we were living in the relative comfort of a house in Bangor and only certain interludes actually intruded on that. One example – the army were chasing some people in a car with explosive material in it and they actually abandoned the car in the road that we were living in. So we all had to move out of our houses and during the course of the night we had to take our two children out...

The sense of being in a world apart, mentioned in the previous quote, was highlighted when Andy Pollak gathered evidence for *The Opsahl Report on Northern Ireland*⁷. Pollak concluded that middle-class people who were not working for the military, police or prison service had a low risk of being harmed by the conflict and stated that the violence predominantly impacted on the lives of people in deprived, working class urban communities and those living in border areas (1993, 9). Several respondents referred to the class-based and localised nature of the conflict. Here are two more examples from the interviews:

The 'Troubles' are one thing but the actual environment that people lived in, I think, is well obviously closely aligned to the 'Troubles', and north/west Belfast at that time was reckoned in a whole series of criteria to be one of the most deprived areas in western Europe. The standard of housing was deplorable. Unemployment was running at something like 50 to 60 per cent. And most of that was long term unemployment amongst men, particularly Catholic areas more than the Protestant areas.

I was living in this nice little bubble in the middle of county Armagh very comfortable and not very affected by the 'Troubles'... In some ways I can't really remember any events that affected me personally... and that's different when I get to be in my business life because it started to really affect us...I think a lot of Northern Ireland kids in the middle classes particularly were. It

was the working classes...the working class people, particularly in Northern Ireland, have been right through the 'Troubles'. It was they who were at each other's throats generally and they were the ones who were moving out of... so Protestants were getting out of Catholic areas or vice versa but those were all working class areas.

By 1998 when the constitutional settlement known as the Good Friday Agreement had been negotiated, more than 3,600 people had been killed and 30,000 injured (Fitzduff, and O'Hagan 2009, 1). What follows is an exploration of a number of different explanations for the outbreak of the 'Troubles'.

3.4.1. Institutionalised inequality

Thomas Hennessey traces the origins of the 'Troubles' to Terence O'Neill's premiership of Northern Ireland which began in 1963 and argues that O'Neill's critics believed that he challenged some basic assumptions of what Northern Ireland stood for (2005, ix). This was expressed succinctly by Sir James Craig (who eventually became Lord Craigavon), the first Northern Ireland prime minister, when in a speech in the Belfast parliament in 1934 he asserted that: 'All I boast is that we are a Protestant parliament and a Protestant state'³⁷ (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 13). According to Hennessey, O'Neill sought to improve relationships between the different communities and introduce reforms to improve the situation of Northern Ireland Catholics. However, he did not intend to fundamentally change the sectarian basis of political power or the Union (2005, 2). O'Neill wanted to address an increase in sectarian violence in impoverished areas of Belfast and Derry, linked to a decline in traditional industries, increased unemployment and poor housing (McKittrick and

³⁷ According to McKittrick and McVea, Craig's words have been misquoted by his critics as 'a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people' (2001, 13). Hennessey adds that Craig was responding to a Nationalist MP's complaint about discrimination against Catholics in employment. Craig observed that in Southern Ireland there was a Catholic State, in Northern Ireland a Protestant one. He asserted that the main criteria for employment should be loyalty to the state not religion. However, his colleague Sir Basil Brooke, in 1932 openly urged members of the Orange Order to employ only Protestants (2005, xiii).

McVea 2001, 28). McKittrick and McVea argue that O'Neill reached out to the nationalist community by, for example, visiting Catholic schools. He also invited the Taoiseach³⁸ of the Irish Republic, Sean Lemass, to Belfast for talks. O'Neill also made a return visit to Dublin. This was the first formal contact between the two governments since the 1920s (2001, 29-30).

McKittrick and McVea go on to suggest that although there were unionists who welcomed O'Neill's attempts at bridge building, there was a substantial minority of traditional unionists who were strongly opposed.³⁹ These unionists were represented by people such as the Rev. Ian Paisley, who as moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church and leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) was becoming a strong populist voice (2001, 30). Hennessey asserts that O'Neill's expression of condolences following the death of Pope John XXIII in 1963, touched a raw nerve with unionists who were concerned by what they saw as a threat to the Protestant way of life (2005, 2). At this time the ecumenical movement had the support of the late Pope and the World Council of Churches. Hennessey argues that it is an indication of how insecure unionists felt that despite their dominant political position, they feared that ecumenicalism represented a move towards reunification with the Roman Catholic Church (2005, 3-4).

In 1967 the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was founded to put pressure on the Northern Irish and British governments to introduce reforms to redress institutional discrimination and promote civil rights for all. However, although the focus of the organisation was on equality of civil rights rather than Irish unity

³⁸ In the Irish language Taoiseach means chieftain or leader.

³⁹ In 1966 the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) firebombed the Holy Cross primary school in Belfast. O'Neill had been due to speak at a meeting about how to improve relationships between the Catholic and Protestant communities. The same school was the subject of a loyalist blockade in 2001 (Wood 2009, 21).

(Hennessey 2005, 129), Coohill suggests that the NICRA soon became seen as solely representing the interests of Catholics in Northern Ireland, because of its focus on what were primarily nationalist concerns (2008, 173).⁴⁰ Furthermore McKittrick and McVea argue that many unionists believed that the real agenda of the NICRA was the border issue and were strongly critical of the movement insisting that it was a front for the IRA (2001, 43-44).

McKittrick and McVea suggest that the trigger for the first direct action taken by NICRA was perceived discrimination in the allocation of council housing. Council housing policies were predominantly sectarian resulting in separate Catholic and Protestant housing estates. In June 1968 a number of NICRA members decided to occupy a council house in Co. Tyrone which had been promised to a single Protestant woman, instead of one of the many Catholic families waiting to be housed (2001, 40-41). The NICRA decided to continue with a planned march in Derry on 5 October 1968 despite the decision by William Craig, Northern Ireland Minister for Home Affairs, to ban it (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 41). Simon Prince suggests that due to confusion within the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) about how to manage the event, many of the protesters found themselves trapped down a side street and unable to move on when ordered to do so. Water cannons were used to clear the area, causing many injuries. Several police officers also became provoked at the insults thrown at them and started lashing out at the protesters with their batons. These events were filmed and shown around the world, exposing social disorder and police brutality in Northern Ireland, and causing great embarrassment to the British

⁴⁰ The original steering committee included a very diverse range of people including communists, republicans, liberals and trades unionists. There was even a unionist representative, Robert Cole. However, Hennessey argues that as the NICRA became more identified with the nationalist community and started to use direct action tactics, it lost the support of moderate unionists (2005, 129).

government (2007, 5).

3.4.2. Political responses to civil unrest

Following the Derry march, the British prime minister, Harold Wilson, demanded a speedy escalation of reforms. O'Neill was summoned to Downing Street and, according to McKittrick and McVea, Wilson threatened to reduce financial support to Northern Ireland unless issues such as voting rights were addressed (2001, 45). O'Neill was unable to persuade his cabinet colleagues to support his proposed reform package. As violence on the streets increased he made an appeal to the public for calm in what has become known as 'the crossroads speech' (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 47).⁴¹ In 1969 there was an increase in violence and disorder when a march by the People's Democracy Group from Belfast to Derry, was ambushed at the Burntollet Bridge just outside Derry city.⁴² Loyalists were filmed attacking people on the march and the RUC were accused by nationalists of failing to intervene and of colluding with loyalists (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 48). Violence escalated and the RUC struggled to contain the level of disorder. O'Neill's position continued to deteriorate and following a divisive election on the 24 February, he resigned the premiership on 28 April 1969 (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 50).

In August 1969 British troops were sent to Northern Ireland, first to Derry and then to Belfast to restore order on the streets. This move was initially welcomed by the nationalist community who felt particularly vulnerable to sectarian violence. However, as curfews were imposed and house to house searches began to result in the arrest

⁴¹ O'Neill's television appeal on 9 December 1968 for the public to stay calm became known as the 'Crossroads Speech' because during it he said: 'Ulster stands at the Crossroads' (Melaugh 2006).

⁴² The People's Democracy Group was founded in October 1968 and the membership was predominantly students from Queen's University, Belfast. One of the leaders of the Group was Bernadette Devlin who supported the establishment of an all-Ireland Socialist Republic (Melaugh 2010).

of suspected IRA volunteers, relationships soured between nationalists and troops (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 61). Sectarian violence increased and communities started to set up barricades and road blocks to delineate their territory. Some of these barricades became 'peace lines' and are still there in areas such as north Belfast.⁴³ There was loyalist dissatisfaction with the way the threat to them from sections of the nationalist community was being dealt with by the security forces. In response they formed their own defence groups (McCartney 1999, 17). Following unionist anger over the imposition of direct rule from Westminster in March 1972, many of these groups merged to form the 'Ulster Defence Association' (UDA). The UDA was the largest of the loyalist paramilitary groups and actively targeted Catholics who they claimed had links to the IRA (Fitzduff and O'Hagan 2009, 6).

By the end of 1969 there was another development which added to the sense of crisis in Ireland. There was a growing division within the IRA between those in the Republic who wanted to follow a Marxist agenda using political action and the Northern Irish wing of the movement which wanted to use greater military force to defend the nationalist community. The movement eventually split into the Official and Provisional wings (Gillespie 2009, 18-19). In 1970 the Provisional IRA intensified their military campaign against the army and representatives of the British state (Bew 2009, 49). In 1971 internment without trial was introduced with the support of the British government, to deal with the increasing security problem (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 67). According to Bloomfield, internment was a grave mistake and led

⁴³ Peter Shirlow's work (2003) outlines how between 1968 and 2001 approximately 7,500 families in Belfast moved into predominantly Catholic or Protestant residential areas to escape sectarian violence and intimidation. The Ardoyne district of north Belfast is an example of how the two communities continue to live close to each other but in very separate spaces. The area is divided by a 'peace line', constructed in 1971, into Catholic Ardoyne and Protestant Upper Ardoyne. Both communities include many people who have experienced the death of a close family member because of the 'Troubles' (approximately 1 in 18). A sense of victimhood remains and hostility towards the 'other' persists despite the progress that has been made at a political level.

to an escalation of violence between republican paramilitaries and the British army rather than to a reduction in the conflict (2007, 24).

Increased hostility was compounded by the events of 30 January 1972, known as 'Bloody Sunday', when British soldiers shot dead 13 people taking part in a banned civil rights march in Derry – the final death toll reached 14 when another casualty died of his wounds four months later (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 76-77). Military commanders later said that their troops had been shot at first. According to McKittrick and McVea, one of the main consequences of 'Bloody Sunday', and the Widgery Inquiry exonerating the British army, was an increase in Catholics joining republican paramilitary groups such as the IRA. Anglo-Irish relations were damaged and nationalists on both sides of the border took to the streets to protest (2001, 76-77).

One respondent shared his memories of that event:

...then I remember – the other big memory was Bloody Sunday, having grown up with the story of the burning of... (his home town) and knowing that the inquiries were not truthful in their outcome, we immediately knew the emotional truth of what happened about that, and I remember downing tools where I worked at the time when we all marched up to the town centre – it was the time they burned the British Embassy. It was the only time I have been caught up in that feeling of really doing something outside my deep values, as a young man. I was about 25 and then the shock – burning the Embassy – realising how quickly civil society could break down. Now I believe that Jack Lynch⁴⁴ let that burn down as a way of bringing us back to our senses. That was a decision to let it burn both as a signal to the Brits, but as a wakeup call to the population because if he had stopped it, if he had sent in the army to stop the crowd, Lynch would have turmoil on the streets. Well, as the Provisional IRA got out of control we met the tit for tat stuff on the streets of Belfast. I mean it was highly emotional, the siege of the Falls Road.

Elliott describes the consequences of 'Bloody Sunday' as contributing towards:

...the profoundly negative impact of the northern Troubles on the Irish Republic, which eroded the liberalism of the 1960s and revived extreme nationalism, anti-Englishness, and anti-Protestantism (2009, 1-2).

⁴⁴ Jack Lynch was Taoiseach of the Irish government from 1966 to 1973 and 1977 to 1979.

Against the wishes of the Unionist government, direct rule was imposed by Edward Heath, the British prime minister (Coogan 1995, 140). Heath became convinced that the Northern Ireland government could not maintain security or develop political progress. Increasingly the British government believed that reforms on their own would not produce a more stable society (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 73); what was needed was a way for nationalists to participate in the government of Northern Ireland and have a real stake in society (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 81). In the 1970s there were many attempts by the British and Irish governments, working with nationalist and unionist politicians, to find a constitutional solution to the 'Troubles'. The Sunningdale Agreement of 1973, which included a power sharing Executive, looked like a positive development (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 95-96). However, the Executive ran into difficulties because of lack of support within the unionist community and opposition from republicans (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 98-99).

In May 1974 the public and politicians were reminded that the 'Troubles' were not just confined to Northern Ireland when a number of bombs exploded in the Republic of Ireland (Elliott 2009,1). One respondent said that:

We had bomb hoaxes and so on in Dublin and a lot of them were hoaxes rather than the reality but I remember once I was standing in the restaurant at twenty past five. I think it was a Friday afternoon, certainly the afternoon – closing at half five – and suddenly the whole building shook and that was when the bombs went off in South Leinster Street, Talbot Street and Parnell Street and there were deaths and because we were closing at half past five it was a question of: were there any staff who had gone early to get their buses or whatever? Because there was a bus terminal there as well.⁴⁵

According to McKittrick and McVea, Roy Mason, who became Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in 1977, decided that a political solution was unobtainable in the

⁴⁵ Melaugh refers to the 'four car bombs that exploded in Dublin and Monaghan, Republic of Ireland, on Friday 17 May 1974. 33 civilians and one unborn child died as a result of the four explosions. Approximately 258 people were injured. The bombings resulted in the greatest loss of life in a single day of the conflict. No one was ever arrested or convicted of causing the explosions' (2006).

current climate (2001, 119). Mason decided to focus on security and building the economy. One of the policies he inherited was the decision to remove 'special category status' from prisoners convicted of political offences.⁴⁶ This was strongly resisted by republican prisoners and was to have wide reaching consequences. Some went on hunger strike and a number of prisoners died. According to Gerry Adams (president of Sinn Féin), this created many more martyrs for the Republican movement and increased membership of the IRA and Sinn Féin (2003, 53). The hunger strikes were eventually called off when it became clear that the British government, now led by Margaret Thatcher, would not back down. McKittrick and McVea suggest that consequently the sectarian divide deepened and further damage was caused to Britain's reputation, particularly in the Irish Republic and the United States (2001, 146).

3.4.3. Moves towards a peace process

After a number of failed attempts by the British government to set up devolved institutions in Northern Ireland (Darby 1995, 7-8), the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed by the British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, and Garret FitzGerald, the Irish Taoiseach, in November 1985. Coogan suggests that this was one of the most important developments in the history of Anglo-Irish relations since the 1921 Treaty (Coogan 1995, 183). This was because the Agreement gave the Irish government a formal say in Northern Irish policy and created a framework to work towards a peace settlement. Unionists were strongly opposed to the Agreement and it was regarded as a betrayal of the unionist community by the British government (McPhilemy 1998, 7).

Despite unionist/loyalist hostility towards the Anglo-Irish Agreement the peace

46 In 1972 William Whitelaw, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, gave 'special category status' to prisoners convicted of paramilitary offences. They were allowed to wear their own clothes, have free association within designated areas, more prison visits than ordinary prisoners, and were not required to work. In 1975 the British government decided to remove 'special category status' from March 1976. After that time anyone convicted of terrorist offences were not regarded as political prisoners and were therefore to be treated the same as other prison inmates (Melaugh and Lynn 2005).

process continued. There was a realisation by both the IRA and the British government that the conflict could not be solved by military means alone (Fitzduff and O'Hagan 2009, 6). During the late 1980s Gerry Adams, had private meetings with John Hume of the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) to see if they could work out common political goals (Fitzduff and O'Hagan 2009, 6). Adams also held secret talks with unionists and asserts that he was determined to move republicans towards a political settlement based on peaceful rather than military means (2003, 53-54). At the grassroots level, community groups such as Quakers played their part in promoting dialogue between nationalist and unionist communities and a number of new political parties were founded, such as the Women's Coalition in 1996, which sought to provide new thinking about the conflict (Fitzduff and O'Hagan 2009, 6).

On 15 December 1993 the Downing Street Declaration was issued by the British and Irish governments. The document included the statement that the British government 'had no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland' and would introduce legislation to provide Irish unity if the majority of the electorate in Northern Ireland were in agreement (Melaugh and Lynn 2005).⁴⁷ In 1994 the IRA announced a ceasefire, followed by the Combined Loyalist Military Command also declaring their intention to lay down their weapons. The IRA ceasefire was tenuous however, and in February 1996, frustrated by the lack of political progress the IRA planted a bomb in Canary Wharf in London which killed two people, injured many others, caused widespread damage and ended the ceasefire (Melaugh 2006).

⁴⁷ John Major was the Conservative British prime minister at this time and there were many political factors impeding the peace process, these included a very small government majority which gave Conservative Euro-sceptic and Ulster Unionist MPs a disproportionate influence on government policy. There was opposition by the DUP to the involvement of the Irish Republic in Northern Ireland affairs and tension between US and British leaders about Gerry Adams being invited to the White House in 1994. The Unionist parties were also insisting that Sinn Féin be excluded from talks until the IRA decommission their weapons. John Major tried hard to manage all these competing demands. However, Coogan claims his government was ineffective (1995, xiv).

In May 1997 a Labour government was elected in Britain with a large majority and Tony Blair became prime minister.⁴⁸ In the Northern Ireland elections in the same year there was a shift in the power balance between nationalists and unionists, with the SDLP and SF gaining more council and parliamentary seats than in previous elections (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 215). Blair appointed Marjorie Mowlam to the position of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and she brought a strong sense of dynamism to her role. Mowlam was popular with nationalist but not unionist politicians and was eventually replaced by Peter Mandelson in 1999 (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 216). Blair prioritised achieving a constitutional settlement in Northern Ireland, and resumed talks with Sinn Féin. Gerry Adams announced that he had asked the IRA to declare another ceasefire which they did in July 1997 (McKittrick and McVea 2001, 302-3).

The American ex-senator George Mitchell chaired multi-party negotiations and after almost a year of painfully slow progress the Good Friday Agreement was concluded on 10 April 1998. The Agreement was signed by non-sectarian, nationalist and unionist parties (with the exception of the DUP).⁴⁹ Simultaneously the British and Irish governments signed an international agreement (Fitzduff and O'Hagan 2009, 1). The main provisions of the Good Friday Agreement were that the Republic of Ireland give up its territorial claim to Northern Ireland, cross-border bodies be set up with executive powers, elections be held for a power-sharing Assembly and paramilitary

48 In 1998 Tony Blair, the British prime minister, announced a comprehensive inquiry into the events of 'Bloody Sunday' chaired by Lord Saville. The findings of the Inquiry were published on 15 June 2010 and concluded that the shootings were 'unjustified', none of the dead were carrying weapons, the soldiers had not been shot at first, they gave no warning before they opened fire and many of them had lied to the inquiry (*The Guardian* 2010).

49 Ian Paisley, the leader of the DUP during the negotiations, categorically refused to sign the Agreement because of his unwillingness, in his terms, to engage with terrorists (Paisley's references to Sinn Féin were always closely followed by IRA). However, it is remarkable that in 2007 following an Assembly election, Paisley was appointed First Minister with Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness, a senior IRA commander in the 1970s, as his deputy. The two men became known as the 'Chuckle Brothers' and worked well together until Paisley's resignation in May 2008 (Bruce 2009, 271).

prisoners be considered for early release. Referenda in the Republic and Northern Ireland in May 1998 endorsed the Agreement and the Assembly started work on December 1999 (Fitzduff and O'Hagan 2009, 1).

The Assembly was suspended on a number of occasions over issues such as decommissioning of paramilitary weapons and was only finally restored in May 2007.⁵⁰ (Fitzduff and O'Hagan 2009, 7-8). The Good Friday Agreement did not end the violence completely, but it appears that the worst of the 'Troubles' are now over. As one respondent observed:

...we lived in a completely abnormal society. Violence was a daily occurrence for many many years. People's solutions to problems were completely wrong. They were not normal in any sense and yet what we tried to do was to kind of shut off that part of it and live your life as if you were trying to live in a normal society – so look for answers and solutions to problems that you'd find in any fairly normal society.

3.4.4. Section summary

This section outlined some of the key factors that contributed to the outbreak of the 'Troubles', the impact of this violent conflict on people's lives and the political response by the Northern Ireland and British governments. The section concluded by tracing the developments that resulted in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

3.5. The nature of sectarianism

Some key events and trends, especially in the period leading up to the 'Troubles', have been explored to examine the roots of sectarianism in Ireland. The next section of this chapter analyses the impact of sectarianism on people and communities in the island of Ireland and looks at some of the reasons for the persistence of

50 According to Colin Knox, the St Andrews Agreement made in October 2006 was the turning point in the restoration of devolution in Northern Ireland (2010, 13).

sectarianism, especially in parts of Northern Ireland, where many Catholics and Protestants still live in segregated neighbourhoods and there are contentious issues such as parade routes that continue to provoke conflict between the two communities during the annual 'marching season'.⁵¹ William Cunningham, in his reference to Vasquez's Territoriality Theory (1993), states that 'Aggressive displays are part of the realpolitik response to territorial threats' (2001, 7) Cunningham goes on to assert that the need for territorial integrity is compounded by each community's experience of being a double minority and therefore feeling vulnerable. Nationalists are a minority in Northern Ireland and feel detached from their co-religionists in the Republic. Loyalists are a minority in the Island of Ireland and needed constant reassurance from the British government about their commitment to the Union. Both communities are a minority within the British Isles (2001, 8).

I draw on the work of Liechty and Clegg and their definition of sectarianism (outlined in chapter one) which refers to the problematic relationship between religion and politics and development of oppositional identities which impact on relationships. I go on to give some examples of how sectarianism operates on a personal, communal and institutional level.⁵² Liechty and Clegg suggest that sectarianism is not just to do with extreme forms of violence or social segregation, commonplace sectarianism is as important in maintaining the system. They argue that the sectarian system is so entrenched that it doesn't need extreme acts of violence to keep it going; because of the way the two communities view each other, anything that seems to confirm a pre-

⁵¹ During the 'Troubles' there were many violent confrontations between the communities when attempts were made by one group to parade through another's territorial space. The main period when this happens is from June to August with the high point for unionists being the 12th July (to commemorate the Battle of the Boyne) and the 12th August (the Siege of Derry) and is known as the 'marching season'. According to Jarman, about 90 percent of parades are organised by the unionist/loyalist community (2003, 93-94). Eventually the Parades Commission was set up as part of the Good Friday Agreement to help different groups reach agreement about parade routes.

⁵² Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg were co-directors of the 'Moving Beyond Sectarianism' project at the Irish School of Ecumenics from 1995-2000.

existing view of 'other' is enough to maintain sectarian attitudes and behaviours (2001, 12). On a personal level sectarianism can be expressed by negative comments and attitudes and avoidance of contact through to acts of violence against those from the 'other' community (Liechty and Clegg 2001, 111).

An example of how sectarianism operates was given by a respondent who spoke of the experience of one of his employees:

She'd come out of a carpet factory in Portadown, one of these big employers, which is much more difficult for, because sectarianism can go on so much more easily in a big employer. You can control it in a staff of 10 or 11 but when you've got 300 or something, it's awfully difficult to control that sectarianism, and she told me that she was surprised when she came to us and she wasn't put in Coventry coming up to the 12th – because what had happened in the carpet factory was that all the Catholic boys, and there weren't that many, had all been put in Coventry and weren't talked to for ten days before the 12th of July. They were just kind of ostracised from the rest of the community.

Sectarianism was also evident in other spheres of society such as in Trades Unions and other groups in Northern Ireland where issues seen as too sectarian were avoided for fear of alienating some of their members. This respondent commented that:

...you've got CND, the Women's Movement, the TU Movement, the Environmental Movement, and all at some stage will have debates about what local political issues can they legitimately take on and at the same time retain some kind of neutrality in terms of the sectarian questions...However, to do that – to sustain neutrality – often meant that you did not take on some basic human rights issues because these were seen to be identified with only one side of the community, for example, Bloody Sunday.

Sectarianism is also represented visually in the towns and cities of Northern Ireland.

Examples are given in figures 3.1 and 3.2.

3.5.1. Images of sectarianism

Derry/Londonderry Republican Wall Mural



Figure 3.1: Republican Wall Mural

The main theme of figure 3.1 is the campaign for Irish freedom. The image at the top of the mural is the burning of the General Post Office during the Easter Uprising in 1916. Underneath are the words "Free Ireland" with a chained hand holding a lily which has "Made in Britain" written on it. Around the mural are the shields of the four provinces of Ireland – symbolising a united Ireland (McCormick album number 2, mural 42).

Belfast Loyalist Wall Mural



Figure 3.2: Loyalist Wall Mural

Figure 3.2 shows William of Orange and the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 (McCormick album number 46, mural 1578). This event is commemorated every year in Northern Ireland.

3.6. The role of religion in Irish sectarianism

Ganiel and Dixon suggest that the Northern Irish conflict seems to be about religion when denominational terms are used to describe the communities as Catholic and Protestant. They identify two main perspectives in the literature about the role of religion. Firstly, that religion is essentially an 'ethnic marker' rather than the main cause of the communal conflict. This view is expressed by commentators such as

McGarry and O'Leary (1995) who argue that the terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' are indicators of identity used to differentiate between nationalists and unionists. In their view the conflict is about ethnic divisions and territorial claims (2008, 422). However, Ganiel and Dixon contend that one of the problems with this perspective is that religion is defined too narrowly, and underestimated in how identity formation is understood in the Northern Irish context (2008, 422). This point is also stressed by Liechty and Clegg (2001, 50). The second and contrasting perspective Ganiel and Dixon outline is proposed by Bruce (1986, 2009) who stresses the importance of religion, particularly Protestant fundamentalism, as a significant factor in shaping identity and contributing to entrenched sectarianism in that part of the unionist community (2008, 422).

Bruce emphasises the importance that religion and religious beliefs had on the creation of sectarianism and hostility between the two main Christian communities after partition. He suggests that there are fundamental differences between the Catholic Church and Protestantism including church structure and authority, the centrality of the sacraments in Catholicism and the place of scripture. Bruce argues that these factors combined with the different histories, status and national affiliations of the two main communities helps to explain the deep hostility that existed between Catholics and Protestants during the 'Troubles' (2009, 5). Bruce goes on to stress that Ian Paisley and other evangelical Protestants did not invent anti-Catholic rhetoric. Measures such as the clause in the Coronation Oath to promote the Protestant faith and the ban on Catholics ascending the throne were introduced in the seventeenth century because of deep mistrust of Catholicism (2009, 12).

Prince argues that the Catholic Church in Northern Ireland sought to reinforce the ethno-Irish identity of their congregations (2007, 50). This happened particularly through education. Children in Northern Ireland were and are still mainly educated separately.⁵³ Catholic schools taught a nationalist version of Irish history, Gaelic language and culture as well as religious instruction. This enabled Catholics to feel part of the larger Ireland, but set them apart from their Protestant neighbours (Prince 2007, 51).⁵⁴

Liechty and Clegg assert that:

...every attempt at single-cause explanation – political, religious, cultural or any other – will fail to account for the complex actions of individuals and societies (2001, 60-61).

Liechty and Clegg suggest that it is more useful to think of sectarianism as being like an ecosystem within which all the different relevant factors inter-relate in ways that reinforce the conflict (2001, 61). As was outlined in section 1.5, this is compounded by a lack of shared understanding of the past. The communities in conflict have very different individual and communal memories of significant historical events. They remember and commemorate the key events that are important to their community, but it is difficult for them to acknowledge the traditions of the other community.

3.7. Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the development of sectarianism in Ireland and explored the impact on personal and religious identity. The chapter provided an introduction to the political and social development of the two Irish states in order to contextualise the

⁵³ Despite the emergence of integrated schools in the 1980s, there were still only 45 of these schools in 2001 educating just over 4 percent of Northern Irish pupils (Smith 2001, 573).

⁵⁴ However, a Sinn Féin Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) stressed that integrated education on its own was not the answer to sectarianism. Catholic and Protestant children are still unlikely to mix in many social situations. Sinn Féin would like to see a separation between Church and State in education (informal meeting at Moyallon Quaker Centre, Portadown, July 2010).

identity formation of members of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland. It examined the nature and impact of sectarianism and the role of religion. In chapter four I outline the settlement of Quakers in Ireland and discuss how Friends navigated political and social upheaval in Irish society.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) IN IRELAND

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter traced the development of sectarianism in Ireland and explored its impact on religious and social identity. This chapter outlines the circumstances which resulted in a distinctive Quaker response to sectarianism including the emergence of diverse identities, and prioritisation of relational unity, within the organisation.

The chapter examines how Quakers, members of a religious sect founded in England in 1652,⁵⁵ positioned themselves as part of a community of Dissenters, and begins with a brief outline of the emergence of the dissenting tradition in Ireland (4.2). It goes on to explore the history and settlement of Quakers in Ireland from the mid-seventeenth century onwards (4.3). The chapter considers how throughout its settlement in Ireland the Religious Society of Friends sought to navigate the many political and social upheavals that they encountered and explores how Friends responded to these challenges. It suggests that this process of navigation and accommodation is a continuous theme of Irish Quaker history in contemporary times (4.4). The next section examines the emergence of significant theological and political strands of Irish Quakerism in the nineteenth century and the impact this had on the Society (4.5). Friends' involvement in relief work during the 'Great Famine' will be outlined in 4.6. The next section goes on to argue that Friends' attempts to remain apart from involvement in Irish Nationalism proved to be increasingly difficult during the Home Rule crisis of the 1870s (4.7). The response of Quakers to Irish

⁵⁵ The origins and theological outlook of the Religious Society of Friends was discussed in chapter one.

Republicanism is then discussed in 4.8. The 'Troubles' era, the roots of which were covered in the previous chapter, proved to be a major test of Quaker concepts of 'neutrality'. The response of Friends in Ireland to this crisis is explored in 4.10.

4.2. The Established Church in Ireland and nonconformism

According to Philomena Kilroy, the impact of Dissenters on the Established Church (Church of Ireland) came to the fore during the seventeenth century in the Plantation period.⁵⁶ Many of the settlers 'planted' in Ireland were from nonconformist traditions and their theological perspectives were at odds with those of the Church of Ireland. Some of the newcomers remained in the Established Church and sought to change it from within. Kilroy asserts that the separatists believed that the Church was incapable of fundamental reform and had their own denominational allegiance, such as, Presbyterians, Quakers, Independents and Baptists (1994, 2-3). There was fundamental disagreement between the Established Church and nonconformists about church structure, government and forms of worship (Kilroy 1994, 3). Richard Greaves argues that after the restoration of Charles II in 1660, although the smaller nonconformist groups continued to exist, only the Religious Society of Friends and Presbyterians became rooted in Ireland and able to provide an alternative to the newly re-established Church of Ireland (1997, 2).

Helen Hatton states that both Catholics and Dissenters were subject to extreme penalties with the imposition of further penal laws in 1660 designed to reinforce the position of the Established Church which had been undermined during the English civil war period (1993, 36). Then in 1704 the 'Test Act' was introduced which forced

56 The 'plantation' of Ulster refers to the policy of the English government which encouraged the settlement of English and Scots loyalists in order to secure the link between England and Ireland (Elliott 2009, 139). This subject was explored in chapter three.

anyone wishing to assume public office to conform to the theological position of the Established Church. Audrey Lockhart argues that this further privileged members of the Church of Ireland in many aspects of Irish life and disadvantaged Dissenters (1988, 82). The next section of this chapter looks more specifically at the establishment of Quakerism in Ireland, the response of the authorities to their form of religious expression and the impact of penal laws and other punitive measures.

4.3. The origins of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland

The foundation of Irish Quakerism dates from 1654 when William Edmondson⁵⁷ held the first Meeting for Worship in Lurgan, County Armagh (Greaves 1997, 28) and then went on to help establish Meetings in the north of Ireland and in Dublin (Kilroy 1994, 83). There were also a number of English missionaries, such as Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill, who were members of a group who became known as the 'Valiant Sixty'⁵⁸, who came frequently to Ireland to preach the Quaker message (Douglas 2004, 13). Converts were mainly drawn from the population of English settlers, including those who had been Cromwellian soldiers and had been given parcels of land in Ireland in lieu of payment for military services (Vann and Eversley 1992, 46). According to Lockhart, many of the soldiers recruited into the new model army were already nonconformists and open to 'convincement' (1988, 67). Wigham asserts that few Friends spoke Irish and this was one of the reasons why native Catholics were hard to preach to and convert (1992, 27-28). It was only in the latter

⁵⁷ Edmondson was born in Westmoreland, England in 1627 and trained as a carpenter and joiner. He eventually joined Cromwell's army and, according to Wigham, was searching for spiritual direction, when he first became aware of Quakerism (1992, 17). After his marriage to Margaret Stanford, Edmondson decided to move to Ireland, where his brother's regiment was stationed, and became established as a shop-keeper. During his first return trip to England, Edmondson met James Naylor (an early Quaker preacher and missionary) and became 'convinced' (Wigham 1992, 18).

⁵⁸ 'The Valiant Sixty' was a term given to a group of early missionaries who were 'convinced' by George Fox and travelled around spreading the Quaker message. According to Elfrida Vipont, Fox often used valiant as a description in his writings (1975, xiii).

part of the twentieth century that some Catholics became interested in Quakerism – how this development impacted on the Society is explored in chapters five and six.

Both Quaker missionaries and those Friends who settled in Ireland were regarded by the authorities as a disruptive influence and many experienced persecution as a result of their activities (Kilroy 1994, 83). According to Wigham, as the number of people attracted to Quakerism steadily increased, the response of the authorities became increasingly harsh (1992, 19). Quakers experienced penalties such as imprisonment, being put in the stocks and fined. Some were banished from Ireland and Meetings were often disrupted (Wigham 1992, 22-23). Kilroy states that Quakers attracted a high level of hostility because of their rejection of Christian teachings about predestination and other aspects of mainstream theology, criticism of the Established Church (by disrupting church services, for example) and insistence on the equality of all. This led to a refusal to conform to social conventions of the time, particularly in the way they addressed other people and their lack of subservience to those in authority (1994, 84).

One of the other main issues of contention was the refusal of Quakers to pay tithes to the Church of Ireland or swear oaths (Kilroy 1994, 86). Wigham states that after the Restoration, nonconformists continued to be persecuted by the authorities (1992, 24). There were restrictions on where they could live and worship. For example, The Five Mile Act was passed in 1665 and prevented Dissenters from 'coming within five miles of any corporate town, thus cutting them off from the mass of their supporters' (Morton 1992, 233). This explains why many Quaker Meeting Houses were

established at least five miles outside of towns, for example the ones at Richhill and Grange, and for reasons of safety (Douglas 2004, 8-9). As Colin Rynne argues:

...far from forming part of a Protestant colonial elite (despite their professed loyalty and avowed 'English' ethnicity), Irish Quakers and other dissenters, were originally treated in the same way as the majority Roman Catholic population (2008, 4).

Although there was eventually some easing of restrictions on nonconformists, for example, the introduction of the Toleration Act in 1719 (Lockhart 1988, 83); one of the outstanding issues for Quakers, that was not resolved until the nineteenth century, was the requirement to pay tithes (Wigham 1992, 24). According to Richard Harrison, by the early 1720s, the position of Quakers in society was different to that of other Protestants, both those in the Established Church and other Dissenters, because of their stance on tithing and their peace testimony (2008, 12).

Kilroy suggests that by 1660, despite all the difficulties they had experienced, Quakers had managed to establish 30 Meetings. By 1701 this had grown to 53 (Kilroy 1994, 90). The geographical spread of Quakerism was uneven; Quakers tended to be concentrated in specific parts of Ireland in the provinces of Munster, Leinster and Ulster, in small urban centres and in the major cities of Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick (Vann and Eversley 1992, 47-48). There was no Provincial Meeting in Connaught because it had a very small number of Quakers (Hatton, 1993, 36). Endogamy was strictly enforced and this explains why the regional association with certain Quaker families continued (Harrison 2008, 11). Furthermore, Vann and Eversley state that endogamy led to a trend of dynastic marriage, connecting Quaker families in the north and south of the country (1992, 60). In 1669 George Fox came to Ireland (Wigham 1992, 25). Wigham states that the main outcome of Fox's visit

was to confirm the structure of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland ⁵⁹(1992, 26).

According to Kilroy, it was very important that any conflict between Friends be settled within the Society and 'so strong was the desire to maintain unity that those who refused to settle differences within the meeting were disowned' (1994, 96). This also applied to doctrinal disputes; any Quaker who intended to write a religious tract was required to bring it to their Meeting to gain approval. Kilroy argues that the threat of disownment and close supervision of Friends was how the corporate body maintained unity in this period (1994, 96-97). How Friends in contemporary times manage unity is explored in chapter six.

4.3.1. Section summary

When Quakers first arrived in Ireland they found a country that was decimated by the impact of Cromwellian policies and the English civil war. In addition to the penal laws against Dissenters, they faced extra hardships because of their refusal to pay tithes and swear oaths. This position not only made the early years of settlement very difficult, it set Quakers apart from other nonconformists as did the strict enforcement of endogamy. The structure of the Religious Society of Friends was based on the system introduced by George Fox in England. It dealt with overseeing conformity to Quaker discipline and supporting Friends, as they bore the consequences of their refusal to acquiesce to the authorities in matters of religious conscience.

⁵⁹ Provincial Meetings were renamed Quarterly Meetings in 1792 (Religious Society of Friends in Ireland 1971, 4).

4.4. The response of early Friends to violent conflict in Ireland

John Douglas suggests that the first major test of the peace testimony of Friends came during the period of violent conflict in Ireland between 1689 and 1691 known as the Williamite war⁶⁰ (2004, 9). Although Friends refused to participate in the war, Greaves states that they pledged their loyalty to James II in 1689, following his proclamation of religious liberty and promise to protect Friends (1997, 144-145). However, Harrison asserts that the natural sympathies of Friends was with William of Orange and although the penal laws that resulted from the Treaty of Limerick in 1691 which marked the formal ending of the war, 'further reinforced sectarian prejudice', Quakers were keen not to be seen as undermining the Protestant Ascendancy that was the outcome of the conflict (2006, 23).

Nevertheless, according to Greaves, many Friends experienced great hardship during the war because of the threat of physical harm, damage to their property and seizure of goods and livestock by militia from both sides (1997, 362-363). Greaves goes on to argue that:

...Friends lived in the shadow of persecution, whether actual or potential, throughout the period, and this cannot have failed to affect their lives both by sharpening the focus between themselves as a separated people and the rest of society and by emphasizing the need for a trenchant organisation to preserve their community and its traditions (1997, 363).

The next example of how Friends responded to sectarian violence in Ireland occurred towards the end of the eighteenth century. Wigham contends that during the period leading up to the 1798 Rebellion, Friends were concerned not to be placed in a position of taking sides or participating in the conflict (1992, 65). According to Thomas Hancock, this position was criticised as a 'dereliction of civic duties' by

⁶⁰ This became known as the Williamite or Jacobite war because the two protagonists were William of Orange and James II.

loyalists (1844, 25). The National Meeting of 1795 cautioned that 'all Friends to be guarded against entering into contracts, or dealing in any articles which may weaken our Christian testimony (against war)' (Wigham 1992, 65). This was followed up in 1796 when the National Meeting recommended that Friends destroy their weapons, refuse to assist in the military preparations of either side in the conflict and also to give food and shelter to those in need without showing partiality (Punshon 1984, 154-155). Douglas suggests that the National Meeting had a clear position that Friends should not be drawn into the conflict, but locally some Friends found it difficult to comply, not so much to take sides, but to protect their families and property (1998, 16). According to Wigham, during the Rebellion Friends in counties Kildare and Wexford (where the fighting was most intense in the south of Ireland) were threatened with violence and their houses were raided, but they continued to help both communities (1992, 65). An example of this is located in Susan Egenolf's work about Protestant women's narratives during the 1798 Rebellion which refers to the response of the Quaker Leadbeater family, who lived in Ballitore, county Kildare. Egenolf observes that the Leadbeaters had close ties with members of the United Irishmen, however:

Despite these partisan associations, their deeper religious commitment was to the principles of equality, friendship, and peace, and they refused to engage in any violent political action (2009, 218).

In his observation about the identity of the Religious Society of Friends and their position in Irish society, Rynne asserts that by the nineteenth century:

Irish Quakers...became neither colonist nor colonised. Despite experiencing a form of discrimination familiar to other dissenters, and to Roman Catholics, they remained resolutely loyal to their sovereign. But at the same time they sought to travel two paths. The first was an inward one which enabled them to maintain a strong group identity, the second an outward journey which brought

them gradually closer to a society initially hostile to their existence upon its periphery (2008, 12).

The political turmoil of the late eighteenth century also coincided with a period of discordance about the theological direction of the Religious Society of Friends, both in Ireland and other parts of the Quaker world. The impact on Irish Friends is explored in the next section.

4.5. Theological divergence in Irish Quakerism

According to Liechty and Clegg, by the beginning of the nineteenth century the penal laws were seen as having failed to achieve one of their primary objectives which was to create a Protestant society in Ireland by encouraging Catholics and Dissenters to convert to the Established Church (2007, 86). By this period evangelicalism as a means of conversion was viewed as more acceptable and achievable. Consequently, the Evangelical Society was formed in Ulster in 1798 which spearheaded a very active reform movement (Liechty and Clegg 2007, 86). However, the census of 1861 showed that there had been no significant change in denominational allegiance, indicating these attempts to convert Catholics had largely failed and that the evangelical crusaders 'were far more successful at revitalising their own Protestant Churches' (Liechty and Clegg 2007, 91).

Wigham suggests that the origins of the theological diversity within the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland happened in the late eighteenth century, when there was a sense of spiritual decline in Irish Quakerism which continued until the 'evangelical revival' mentioned above (1992, 67). According to Wigham, this period marked the beginning of a split between Friends who emphasised the workings of the spirit and those who tended to be more scripturally based in their spirituality (1992, 67).

Douglas also refers to Friends being affected by the political tensions of the time (just prior to the 1798 Rebellion) and disunity about theology and Quaker discipline (1998, 16). According to Robert Alexander, outlined in his work about Quakers in the revolutionary period (2006), in the light of the atrocities committed during the 1798 Rebellion, Irish Friends who struggled to reconcile accounts of a God of love in the New Testament with a seemingly vengeful God in the Old Testament:

...were derogatorily referred to by opponents as 'New Lights' or '*Illuminati*', the implication being that they erroneously believed they had received a direct revelation that contradicted scripture. In rejecting a literalist reading of the Bible, especially where the texts contradicted the Quaker peace testimony, this may have been true. By rejecting the 'plenary inspiration of scripture', they also presented a challenge to the increasingly Evangelical stance of the Quaker leadership (2006, 49).

A sign that evangelicalism was in the ascendancy is evidenced by the treatment of Abraham Shackleton, the clerk of Carlow Monthly Meeting, who was disowned in 1801. Shackleton had been in dispute with his Meeting because he had refused to do readings from the revised Queries⁶¹ which referred to the Bible as 'Holy' (Alexander 2006, 49). The theological direction of Quakerism also troubled a number of other Friends and several were disowned or resigned from the Society (Wigham 1992, 69).

Harrison asserts that the 'evangelical revival' had a profound impact on the Religious Society of Friends stating that:

The ideology of evangelicalism (from the mid-19th century) was slowly absorbed into the Quaker ethos, but modified by Quaker Quietist, liberal and communal values. During the 1860s the discovery of this new Biblically-informed access to the living spiritual life galvanised the Society and led to an increasing Quaker population in Ulster, while in Leinster and Munster the Quaker population dwindled (2008, 14).⁶²

61 Advices and queries are texts in the Quaker anthology which give Friends guidance about the conduct of their lives (Quakers in Britain 2013, 1.01.)

62 The concentration of evangelical Friends in Northern Ireland continues to the present time although there are many liberal Quakers in Belfast and a smaller number of evangelicals in the Republic of Ireland (from interviews and Duke's fieldwork notes).

Harrison also makes the point that the distinctiveness of Quakerism in Ulster may also be linked to the influence of Presbyterianism which was a more active force in the north of Ireland than the rest of the country (2008, 13).

The next section turns from the internal theological struggles of the Religious Society of Friends to a major crisis in Irish society, exploring the involvement of Quakers in what became known as the 'Great Famine'.

4.6. Quakers and the 'Great Famine' 1845-1852

Chapter three outlined the circumstances leading to the 'Great Famine' in Ireland, the response of the British government and the involvement of Christian groups in the relief work. Hatton argues that Friends were critical of the British government's approach to famine relief. When the 'Great Famine' occurred they decided to set up their own relief scheme (1993, 58). Robin Goodbody also suggests that Friends were concerned that the relief measures set up by the government would not be effective without their practical and financial support (1995, 3). The Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends was established in Dublin in 1846 to co-ordinate the work. According to Goodbody, there was an early recognition of the difficulty of linking with other parts of Ireland, particularly Connaught, which had no Provincial Meeting and where the impact of the famine was very acute (1995, 4). Goodbody also refers to a corresponding meeting being convened by Meeting for Sufferings⁶³ in London to consider a response to the crisis and seek the advice of Irish Friends. It was decided to set up a relief committee, with Quakers in England focusing on fundraising and

63 Meeting for Sufferings was founded in London in 1675 with the purpose of assisting Friends experiencing persecution by the authorities for their religious beliefs. In time its focus changed to campaigning and acting as a permanent committee dealing with matters that arose between the Yearly National Meetings of Friends (The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain 2013, 7.01).

those in Ireland on relief distribution (1995, 5). Soup kitchens were established by Quakers in Dublin and Cork, these kitchens became the standard approach for distribution of the soup in other parts of the country (Wigham 1992, 85-86). In time sub-committees were organised 'to handle specific tasks', including committees in the south and south-west of Ireland to manage relief operations in those areas (Goodbody 1998, 28). Friends also made contact with non-Quakers closer to the regions where people were in need of relief and worked with them to operate the soup kitchens and distribute other forms of relief and clothing (Goodbody 1998, 28).

According to Goodbody, by 1847, the need for food and clothing lessened and the focus of the relief committee changed to providing more long-term solutions (1998, 28). At that time the British government had decided to change the system for providing relief and establish their own soup kitchens which would be administered through the poor law unions.⁶⁴ This followed the removal of the requirements for admittance to the poor house to receive relief for certain categories of paupers, or for those deemed 'fit' for employment who had previously worked on government sponsored schemes in order to receive food (Goodbody 1998, 28). Quakers did not want to replicate what was being offered and, in addition, they were beginning to run out of funds to continue this form of assistance. It was therefore decided to use the resources available to concentrate on provision for those not entitled for help from the government and to fund projects that would provide people with the means to become more self-sufficient and produce their own food (Hatton 1993, 7).

⁶⁴ Ireland was divided into Poor Law Unions for the purpose of providing relief to the destitute and each district was managed by an elected board of guardians. There were strict regulations about who was eligible for relief (Goodbody 1995, 7). In 1847 the government introduced a new Poor Law scheme and a Food Kitchens Act was implemented. This changed the basis of the government provision of relief (Wigham 1992, 87).

According to Hatton, Quakers were interested in the causes of poverty and ways that they could help to alleviate it. This approach directly challenged the dominant economic laissez-faire thinking of the time (1993, 6). Wigham adds that there were many publications written by Quakers, such as Jonathan Pim, about the land tenure system which they argued needed reforming to reduce the insecurity of poor agricultural workers (1992, 88). With the principle of promoting self-sufficiency in mind, Quakers went to visit fishing communities, and through loans of cash to replace nets and boats that had been pawned, they supported those communities to have the means to resume fishing (Goodbody 1998, 29). There was also a focus on increasing the variety of crops grown to reduce the dependence on the potato crop, and therefore in 1847 and 1848 there was a wide distribution of vegetable seeds across the country which Goodbody asserts resulted in an estimated 32,000 acres of crops being grown (1998, 29-30). A number of agricultural schemes were also set up, some with more success than others, to try out new ways of cultivation and provided employment at a higher rate of pay than the earlier government sponsored projects (Goodbody 1998, 30). Other projects included a model farm in Galway in 1849 and loans to create employment in the industrial sector (Goodbody 1998, 30).

Hatton suggests that at the time, Quakers considered that their efforts to alleviate the impact of the famine had largely been a failure because they were not successful in persuading the government to bring about radical change to tackle the underlying causes of poverty and deprivation in Ireland (1993, 267). Additionally, the scale of the death toll from the famine and emigration of people from Ireland made it difficult for those involved in relief work, to feel positively about their efforts. The perceived failure of influence stemming from the 'Great Famine' was one of the reasons why

Quakers were persuaded to enter politics, when Jonathon Pim became the first Irish Friend to enter parliament as a Liberal MP for Dublin in 1865 and continued to campaign for land reform (Goodbody 1998, 32).

However, Goodbody argues that considering that there were only 3,000 Friends in Ireland at this time, the scale and diversity of their work was remarkable (1998, 32).

In addition, one respondent commented that:

I think historically in the Republic there was considerable recognition for the role Friends played in famine relief, and also I think there may be some recognition for what I would deem, although it's contradictory, Protestant neutrality. Personally I would rather that Friends were neutral between sects but as the majority of people would perceive you – if you were other than RC and a Christian – as being a Protestant...I do think that certainly the famine recognition has left an impression of Friends in the Republic which is benign.

This observation suggests that there is a corporate Irish memory of the non-sectarian approach of Friends to the provision of relief during the 'Great Famine' which has persisted in contemporary times.

4.7. Quakers and Irish Home Rule

The Home Rule movement of the 1870s sought to repeal the 1801 Act of Union which removed the Irish parliament, and campaigned for greater political autonomy and tenant rights (this was discussed in chapter three). This period marked the greater involvement of Quakers in politics which had begun in the post-famine period with the entry of Friends into the political sphere as MPs in the Westminster parliament. As Wigham asserts:

...we can see Friends in the latter half of the nineteenth century recognising themselves as Irish but loyal to the union and the Queen in common with their middle class peers. They were usually Liberal in politics, perhaps incorporating the more radical emphasis of John Bright's aim of freetrade and peace. They were usually followers of Gladstone until the advent of Home Rule (1992, 102).

The political neutrality of Quakers was tested by the first Home Rule Bill in 1886 with Friends divided for and against (Wigham 1992, 102). Wigham suggests that a large majority of Irish Friends were opposed to Home Rule on the grounds that it would give undue influence to the clergy in an Irish parliament and religious and civil liberties could not be guaranteed (1992, 103). Irish Friends in support of Home Rule sent their own petition and maintained that opposition was motivated by concern to protect the Protestant Ascendancy (Wigham 1992, 103). Ashton outlines how anti-Home Rule Protestants in Ireland set up a committee which became the Ulster Loyalist Anti-Repeal Union (2000, 23). A minority of Protestants were in favour of Home Rule and they formed the Irish Protestant Home Rule Association (IPHRA) based in Belfast and Dublin. A number of Irish Quakers were members, including Alfred Webb, T. H. Webb and Henry Wigham (2000, 23). Alfred Webb in particular, sought to challenge fears that Protestants would experience disadvantage within a more autonomous Ireland and wrote pamphlets about this issue (Ashton 2000, 23).

According to Marie-Louise Legg, 'Irish Quakers have been described as neither 'established Protestants nor Catholics', and this sense of 'apartness' informed their social and political attitudes'; Legg refers to the concern of Richard Webb (father of Alfred) about what he saw as the potential for deepening the sectarian divide by the creation of mass movements such as the Catholic Association⁶⁵ (1999, 2). Harrison argues that Richard Webb struggled to reconcile his progressive views with the sectarian nature of Irish society and the difficulty within IYM of open discussion about different political perspectives (1993, 3). Both Alfred and Richard Webb left the Society in 1858 because of what they considered to be its innate conservatism (Legg

⁶⁵ The Catholic Association was founded in 1823 by Daniel O'Connell to campaign for civil and political rights for Irish Catholics (Foster 1992, 157).

1999, 2-3). This indicates that the pro-unionist culture of Irish Quakerism was unable to sufficiently accommodate nationalist perspectives and some Friends felt that they had no choice but to resign their membership.

As outlined in chapter three, although the third attempt to introduce Home Rule for Ireland in 1912 was successful, the Act was not passed into law because of the outbreak of the First World War. Unionists in Ulster had begun mobilising against Home Rule and Protestants were under pressure from leading Unionist politicians, such as Sir Edward Carson, to sign the Ulster Covenant.⁶⁶ Marianne Elliott refers to the sponsorship of the 'Solemn League and Covenant' by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. She suggests that many people from the dissenting tradition were very concerned that Home Rule would increase the influence of the Roman Catholic Church and Protestants would become an oppressed minority (Elliott 2009, 140).

A quote from a respondent illustrates the mixed responses within his family to the Ulster Covenant:

I actually checked just recently about my family back in 1912 when the Ulster Covenant was signed because there's a list of all the people who signed the Covenant. There are four or five (family name) in this area – they must be my relatives who signed the Covenant – which I find surprising now looking back saying they were Quakers, why would they sign it? Now my great grandfather who was probably the most theologically sound, he was very much a leading Friend of his time, he did not sign it. That doesn't surprise me that he did not sign it. I suspect he had more Quaker blood in him. There was something that said to him that it wasn't right, but his brother who was not as spiritually involved signed it and his wife signed it. There were other relatives around who signed it...My great grandmother did not either.

It is significant that this respondent claims his great grandfather did not sign the Covenant because 'he had more Quaker blood in him'. This implies that there was

⁶⁶ This refers to the signing of the 'Solemn League and Covenant' which with the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in 1913, represented unionist opposition to proposed Home Rule legislation in the British parliament. According to Elliott, the majority of the adult, male Protestant population signed the Covenant, (2009, 140).

something about the potential for violence within Ulster Unionism that went against the grain of his Quakerism. However, as Wigham argues Friends who signed the Covenant tended not to become involved in the more radical aspects of Ulster Unionism (1992, 108). The next section discusses the response of Quakers to another key period in Irish Nationalism/Republicanism.

4.8. Quakers and Irish Republicanism in the early twentieth century

Wigham asserts that the Easter Rising in 1916 (outlined in chapter three) came as a surprise to many Irish people including Friends (1992, 117). In discussing the tensions in Ireland in this period and the response of Friends, Desmond Neill states that:

Yearly Meeting agonised over what service the Society in Ireland could render but beyond stressing the need to maintain liberty of conscience found it difficult to interpret God's will. Friends sympathetic to the rise of Sinn Feinn [sic] were a very small minority and there was also a block of hardline Unionists (1989, 8).

The Irish war of independence had broken out by the Yearly Meeting of 1920 and Neill argues in expressing their strong rejection of the use of violence and hope that goodwill would prevail, Friends apparently had a clear position that the Churches should remain apart from political matters (1989, 8). According to Neill, there was unity about the need to provide relief to those affected by the violence but not on other matters such as mounting an appeal to commute the death sentence handed down to Kevin Barry, an Irish republican (1989, 8).

As indicated in the previous section, Friends were mainly pro-unionist. Rosamond Jacob was an exception to this position. She was born into a Quaker family in Waterford in 1888. According to Damian Doyle, the Jacobs regarded themselves as

agnostic, anti-British imperialism and pro-Irish Nationalism (2001, 169-170). Doyle argues that because of their religious and political stance the family were distant from other Friends in the city and disapproved of by other middle-class Protestants (2001, 169-170). Jacob helped to found the Waterford branch of Sinn Féin, belonged to the Gaelic League and a number of other nationalist organisations. Doyle suggests that in time her feminism and criticism of the Catholic clergy brought her into conflict with other members of these organisations (2001, 171). Jacob was imprisoned for a time by the Free State because of her support of the anti-Treaty forces during the Irish civil war (Doyle 2001, 178). According to Leeann Lane:

It was not just her gender coupled with her unmarried status that regulated Jacob to a fringe position in Irish society. From a middle-class Quaker background she did not fit neatly into a Free State Ireland; the specifically Catholic middle-class values on which the ideologies of the new state were premised did not accord her a sense of belonging (2010, 5).

Lane argues that Jacob remained culturally Quaker, even after her resignation from membership of the Society in 1917 and continued to attend talks and social events organised by Friends in Dublin where she now lived (2010, 154). However, this contention has been disputed as I indicated in chapter one. It is interesting to note that Jacob is not mentioned in the work of Quaker writers such as Wigham which suggests that she has not been regarded by some as a part of the Quaker 'family' because of her overt Republicanism (1992). However, Jacob is included in Harrison's *A Biographical Directory of Irish Quakers* (2008) which notes that she was recorded on the list of Waterford members in the early twentieth century: Harrison also observes that 'Rosamond was a pacifist republican and an Irish-speaking internationalist' (2008, 137).

Similarly, Bulmer Hobson is included in the *Directory*; Hobson was born into a Quaker family in Belfast and educated at Friends' school, Lisburn. As a young adult Hobson became actively committed to Irish Republicanism and non-sectarianism and eventually became a senior member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (Hay 2009, 185-186). According to Marnie Hay:

It has been suggested that Hobson's advocacy of a defensive military policy and his opposition to the Easter Rising were a result of latent Quakerism, even though he had resigned from the Society of Friends in 1915. Hobson, by his own admission, placed more importance on achieving Irish independence than on adhering to Quaker principles (2009, 187).

Hobson's Quaker credentials are emphasised in the *Directory* which states that he was raised in an Irish Quaker family with roots going back to the seventeenth century (Harrison 2008, 127-128). Jacob and Hobson do not represent a significant strand of Irish Quakerism in terms of their political outlook. However, it can be argued that the values that they espoused in terms of their non-sectarianism and identification with Irish nationalists' aspiration for emancipation from colonial rule would have been a good fit with the Quaker testimony of equality. What was more problematic, and certainly a factor in Hobson's resignation from the Society, was the use of armed force to achieve these aims which was contrary to the culture and pacifist tradition of Irish Quakerism, although a small number of Friends did enlist to fight in the First World War (Wigham 1992, 115).

Like many other Protestant Churches the Religious Society of Friends remained one organisation after 1921. According to Joyce Neill, the partition of Ireland seems not to have had a significant effect on the Society, suggesting that it was pre-existing theological differences that divided southern and northern Friends (1999, 13).

However, in Wigham's view the active participation of Quakers in the political life of

the Irish Free State – Friends such as James G. Douglas⁶⁷ of Dublin and Benjamin Haughton of Cork were senators in the Irish senate and a number of Friends played an active role in local government – was matched by Friends in Northern Ireland who had been opposed to Home Rule and were strongly unionist in outlook. A number of them were vocal in their concern about the power and influence of the Catholic Church in the Irish Free State (1992, 121-122). This suggests that there was a political divergence opening up in the Society as Friends took their place in the establishment of the two new political entities.

Ross Chapman also observes that after partition many Friends had difficulty getting used to the new political structure of Ireland; there were threats to resign by some Friends and tensions related to political and religious differences. This was not just a north/south issue but connected to social and intellectual factors, for example, Dublin Friends had traditionally occupied leadership roles within the Society and their social status was connected to Dublin being a centre of culture and learning. Furthermore, southern Friends were mainly concentrated in cities. In contrast, Chapman argues, Ulster Friends had a different background, having been mainly small farmers in rural areas from the early period of Irish Quakerism. These Friends were influenced by the Protestant ethos of the communities around them in a benign way, unlike southern Friends located in an overwhelmingly Catholic society which at times negatively impacted on Friends (conversation May 2011 with Ross Chapman). This subject is explored further in chapter five. Wigham suggests that there was a sense at this time of the Irish Free State asserting its identity as a Catholic nation and Protestants, even

⁶⁷ Douglas was a member of the committee that drafted the Irish constitution (1992, 121).

if nationalist in sympathy, being regarded as outsiders. This may help to explain why some Friends maintained a low-key presence in the Free State (1992, 124).

4.8.1. Summary of sections 4.4 to 4.8.

The previous sections outlined the response of Friends to periods of violent conflict in the early period of settlement in Ireland when the peace testimony and wish to remain apart from sectarian conflict was vitally important to Friends. The 'evangelical revival' coincided with the famine years and Friends' substantial contribution to relief efforts and non-proselytising approach gained them useful credibility in their work during the 'Troubles' which is explored in section 4.10. The Home Rule campaign highlighted a growing political divergence in Irish Quakerism and although the Society was predominantly pro-unionist, some Friends had nationalist sympathies and a number of them were active in efforts to achieve Irish independence. The last section looked at the impact of partition on the position of Friends in the two Irish states.

4.9. Quakers and the 'Troubles'

Felicity McCartney states that by the time the 'Troubles' started in the late 1960s there were approximately 1,600 Quakers of whom almost half lived in Northern Ireland (2009, 10). Quakers were aware of the inequalities in Northern Irish society through a variety of means. For example, Denis Barritt, a local Friend, co-authored *The Northern Ireland Problem* in 1962 which highlighted the inequalities in Northern Irish society (McCartney 2009, 10). Additionally, there had been meetings of Friends to discuss cross-border issues since the 1950s (Wigham 1992, 149).

McCartney places initiatives by Friends in Ireland in the context of Quaker testimonies, especially the peace testimony. She suggests that much of the work of Quakers during the 'Troubles' echoes the concerns of earlier Friends. For example, as outlined in section 4.6, Quakers already had a reputation for providing relief and support on a non-sectarian basis during the 'Great Famine'. There was evidently a concern by Friends that they should provide assistance when the 'Troubles' began (2009, 10). As an initial response, Quaker Meeting Houses were used to house homeless people bombed out of their homes in sectarian violence in Belfast. This work became the genesis of the Ulster Quaker Service Committee which was set up to co-ordinate the work and offers of help from Quakers in Ireland and other countries. For example, when internment without trial was introduced in 1971, the Visitor's Centre at the Maze Prison was set up; Quaker House in Belfast, 1982-2010, served as a confidential space for dialogue to help facilitate political negotiation; the Quaker Peace Education Project (QPEP) worked with young people in schools to help develop resources and skills in how to resolve disputes peacefully. This project ran from 1986-1994 (McCartney 2009, 10). Jerry Tyrrell was appointed director of the QPEP in 1988 (Farrell 2009, 124) and facilitated the work of a scheme called Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) which was eventually extended to adults working in community settings (2009, 127-128).

Chapter six explores conflict in the Society about the involvement of Quakers with what were regarded as overtly 'political' matters – an issue that was particularly problematic for some northern Irish Friends from the evangelical wing of Quakerism. A number of respondents observed that it was important that the first

representatives⁶⁸ based at Quaker House be Irish Friends, particularly from Northern Ireland. This explains why in an article appealing to Friends to support Quaker House, Joan and Billy Sinton (representatives from 1982-1984) mention the difficulty of approaching this work as 'insiders', stating that it is important to be aware of and overcome feelings and prejudices and suggest that some Friends struggled with this challenge. They go on to say that the work of Quaker House:

Is not an underhand movement to 'sell out' or to undermine faiths rather it is an effort to achieve the security, stability and Christian standards which we feel are our due. To achieve this we are prepared to meet and try and understand those of different points of view. Where we meet the spirit of reconciliation, we encourage it. Where there is fear and bitterness, we try, in an unobtrusive way, to spread the gospel of love and forgiveness (1984, 4).

Ann Bennett states that in 1995 there was a major review of the work of Quaker House by Clem McCartney, who interviewed users of the project. McCartney concluded that there was a need to continue with the work and referred to the possible contribution of Quaker House to changes in the wider society in 'offering a quiet, non judgemental [sic] space for individuals and groups to explore their own thinking and that of others' (2009, 116). For example, Mo Mowlam (Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 1997-1999) used Quaker House as a venue for informal, private meetings during the period leading up to the Good Friday Agreement. As Janet and Alan Quilley (representatives at Quaker House, 1993-1999) commented:

Janet Quilley: ... she would just relax and we would ask people to come and meet – she wanted to talk to people who might have thoughts about future structures and developments and things. Not necessarily the politicians – [but] academics, people like that.

Alan Quilley: We organised three meals when there were particular people she wanted to meet – we invited [them] to come and chatted and she did what she said in the book [Mowlam's memoirs, *Momentum: The Struggle for Peace, Politics and the People*] we did 'help her to hit the ground running'. We [first]

68 Friends appointed to carry out the work of Quaker House

managed to make contact with her when she was at the SDLP conference – she was very accessible.

Although much of the work of Friends was based in or near Belfast there were significant projects elsewhere in Northern Ireland, for example, the Peace and Reconciliation Group (PRG) in Derry. The PRG included English Friends, Diana and John Lampen, who were in the city from 1983-1994 and built on the work and contacts of Will Warren, another English Friend who was active in Derry from the early 1970s, to act as mediators between republicans and the security forces (Moloney 2007, 364). The PRG included former paramilitaries and had contacts with paramilitary organisations. John Lampen refers to the uneasiness of some local people, especially victims of the conflict, about the willingness of the PRG to enter into dialogue with paramilitaries. Lampen contends that it is possible to be sympathetic to all those affected by violence and still remain impartial (2011, 10-11).

Ed Moloney argues that in Derry the main focus of conflict was between the nationalist community and the security forces (2007, 352). The PRG sought to improve relationships between the police, the British army and the local communities which were at a very low point during the 1980s (Lampen 2011, 12). Lampen suggests that responses to this initiative were also mixed. Some in the IRA felt positive that attempts were being made to challenge oppressive behaviour by the security forces. Other republicans believed that there should be no contact with what they considered to be an illegitimate force (2011, 12). Arthur Chapman suggests that the involvement of John and Diana Lampen in the PRG and its promotion of tension reducing measures set the scene for the IRA ceasefire in 1994 (2009, 30).

Ann Le Mare asserts that Quaker work contributed to capacity building within Northern Ireland by sharing skills and resources, training people and encouraging participation at local and organisational levels (2009, 152). Le Mare states that Quakers were very responsive to local needs and had the capacity to develop a wide range of initiatives including restorative justice, advocacy work and behind the scenes work with politicians, civil servants and other policy makers to improve communication and understanding (2009, 155). She argues that the work undertaken by Quakers is sustaining and has been taken on by other organisations and has had a considerable impact on the lives of individuals (2009, 158).

The Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, County Wicklow, founded in 1974 is an example of an initiative of a small ecumenical group including Quakers (Kenny 1998, 3). Friends involved in this project included members of the Bewley family. In discussing the role of her father, Victor Bewley, in the organisation, and her own role, Rachel Bewley-Bateman said:

In terms of Dad's work with the Travellers and in terms of my work with – at the Centre for Reconciliation you could say that at the start of that Dad had been on the steering committee. There was a group called Working for Peace which started off in Dublin about 1969/70 and Dad and I were both members of that and then they set up a steering committee with a view to getting a place to start the Glencree Centre for Reconciliation. Dad and I had a private chat between us and agreed, and it was Dad's suggestion, that if there was an offer that I would be the one who would go forward for the Council for the Glencree Centre for Reconciliation simply because he was already so much involved with the [Irish] Travellers.

Glencree was used as a base for the Believer's Enquiry in the 1990s to investigate the role of Christians in building peace in Ireland. Quakers were involved both in the early stages of setting up the Enquiry and also contributing their ideas (Kenny 1998, 3-4).

The Ulster Quaker Service Committee, now Quaker Service, continues its work which currently focuses on support for prisoners and their families through the Monica Barritt Visitors' Centre and Quaker Connections befriending service at Maghaberry Prison, county Antrim, and Quaker Cottage, a cross community family support centre in Belfast.

However, according to Wigham, despite the practical response of Friends to the conflict:

There was a deep political division within the Society as to the political merits of a united Ireland as opposed to a continued Northern Ireland in union with Britain. Awareness of this division prevented open discussion and the conflict as such was never discussed in the Yearly Meeting. It must be reckoned as a weakness of the Society at the time that, in spite of the anxiety of visiting English Friends to understand and get to the nub of the problem and seek a solution, the troubles in the North were only discussed in special interest groups (1992, 149).

This point is discussed in chapter six which looks specifically at what the 'Troubles' represented for Friends in terms of their identity and why this made it difficult for the Society to have a coordinated response to the crisis.

4.10. Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the history of Irish Quakerism and the responses of Friends to key political and social events from the period of settlement in the mid-seventeenth century through to the 'Troubles' era, and the basis of the eventual political and theological divergence of Friends. The next chapter introduces theoretical perspectives about identity construction, specifically the work of Jennifer Todd about the persistence of 'oppositional' identity in Ireland. It then goes on to outline the diversity of Friends' identity, exploring identity-related conflict, negotiation and transformation through the main themes which emerged from the interview data.

CHAPTER FIVE

IRISH QUAKER IDENTITY

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter traced the settlement of Quakers in Ireland and examined how they positioned themselves within the sectarian nature of Irish society. This chapter focuses on social identity in Ireland, particularly the identity of Quakers. It begins with an overview of theoretical perspectives related to identity formation relevant for this study – exemplified by the work of Barnsley (2013), Ferguson (2009), Jenkins (2000a, 2000b), Lawler (2014) and Shils (1957) in 5.2. It then examines the function of ‘oppositional’ identities in Ireland through the work of Jennifer Todd – lead researcher of an extensive qualitative research study in the two Irish states between 2003 and 2006 (5.3 and 5.4). This research forms a significant part of the theoretical framework for my study.

I introduce a Quaker identity matrix in section 5.5 which shows how different forms of identity overlap and relate to each other and can be a source of conflict. I explore the complex nature of the identity of Friends in Ireland in terms of the broad spectrum of their cultural and national identities, theological beliefs and social attitudes. Section 5.6 links findings about social identity in Ireland to specific themes about the identity of Irish Friends by comparing and contrasting my research findings with Todd et al’s. There is an exploration of the response of Friends to sectarianism and how individual respondents negotiated and transcended different aspects of their identity. I do this by presenting the main themes from the interview data; these are illustrated by case studies to demonstrate the nature of identity in the Irish Quaker context (5.7).

5.2. Social Identity and theoretical perspectives

In chapter one I introduced the two main theoretical perspectives relating to the formation of social identity – primordialism and social constructivism. This section begins with an outline of primordialist approaches to the study of group identity and ethnic attachment because, although my work fits primarily within the social constructivism approach, it is helpful, for example, to take into account primordialist ideas in the context of understanding the persistence of ‘oppositional’ identities. I then go on to highlight some of the main themes in the literature about the social construction of identity that relate to my study.

In his analysis of the function of ideals and beliefs and the impact on social behaviour in modern societies, Edward Shils argues that in general most people are more concerned with their everyday circumstances and relationships, the status of people in their local community, and personal experience of justice, than more remote symbols of authority and status, and systems of justice in the wider society (Shils 1957, 130). However, Shils suggests that there are occasions when people have more contact with these abstract symbols, for example, during national events of symbolic importance or religious rituals and rites of passage but for most people their primary focus is on the everyday (1957, 130-131). Shils’ view of how a modern society functions is that:

It is held together by an infinity of personal attachments, moral obligations in concrete contexts, professional and creative pride, individual ambition, primordial affinities and a civil sense which is low in many, high in some, and moderate in most persons (1957, 131).

In developing the concept of ‘primordial affinities’ Murat Bayar adds that:

primordialism suggests that ethnicity (a) is constructed around sociologically known similarities, especially around kinship, (b) can be assumed as fixed

once it is constructed, (c) is solidified by violent out-group conflict and/or mass literacy and (d) has an overpowering impact on behaviour, because humans attribute an ineffable significance to their assumed kinship ties (2009, 1643).

Shils charts the interest of sociologists from the late nineteenth century in what came to be termed by Charles Cooley (1909), as the 'primary group' – small communities with very close bonds and intense solidarity between group members, not just through kinship connection, seemingly being undermined by increasing individualism in Western urban societies (1957, 132-133). Shils focused on 'primary groups' that were 'problematic' in some way, for example, in his study of American Nazi sympathisers in the 1940s and their impact on the wider society. He identified a number of significant themes that emerged from this research. The key findings were: the importance attached to solidarity and absolute loyalty between group members and the ideology of Nazism, simplistic ideas about good and evil, the notion of insider and outsider groups, all combined with extreme suspicion of each other and fear that the group was being infiltrated by 'the enemy' (Shils 1957, 134-135). From this and other similar studies Shils concluded that:

...persons with an intense preoccupation, continuous and fervent, with the symbols associated with authority in the corporate organization, within which the primary groups were formed, seemed to be very different kinds of people from those who had a looser, more intermittent and less zealous attachment to the symbols. Conversely, those with strong personal attachments, that is attachments to the personal dispositions of their associates, seemed relatively unresponsive to the symbols of the larger society which were incorporated in the authorities of the society and its major organization (1957, 143).

Shils then went on to categorise people into three groups in terms of their participation in what he referred to as 'the system of ultimate values': those who 'over-participated' in the sense that they were intensely attached to the symbols and value system of their preferred ideology, rather than interpersonal ties, such as the

American Nazis, those who had a moderate approach to participation and those who 'under-participated' (1957, 143). Shils found that most people were in the moderate group, acting sometimes from a sense of civic responsibility and concern for the wider society and at other times motivated by personal attachments and roles (1957, 143-144). Shils argues that those in the 'primary group', although in a minority, tended not to be concerned with what he referred to as 'the civil attachment, the moderate pluralistic concern for the whole' (1957, 144).

It can be argued that the concepts outlined by Shils about how 'primary groups' function contribute to an understanding of the nature of 'oppositional' or sectarian group identities, for example, in explaining the attachment of republicans and loyalists in Northern Ireland to symbols such as national and paramilitary flags and emblems, and the resulting intercommunal conflict because these symbols are seen to represent opposing traditions within the same society. In referring to family ties Shils also makes the point that: 'The attachment to another member of one's kinship group is not just a function of inter-action...It is because a certain ineffable significance is attributed to the tie of blood' (1957, 142). Shils' contention about the significance given to particular attachments (rather than the attachments themselves) is useful in terms of understanding how specific identity labels come to be regarded as embedded characteristics of a group, particularly when territory, shared culture and history is taken into account, as was outlined in chapter one. This can be extended to include the significance given to identity on a personal level and how individuals view their identity as being innate and fixed or alternatively as more fluid and hybrid. This theme is discussed further in section 5.4.

This section now focuses on theoretical perspectives about the social construction of identity which includes concepts about the 'self', the significance of what are termed core categories such as gender and race, arguments about the privileging of certain forms of identity, and post-modernist ideas about individual agency and choice which question the stability of core identity categories. As Glen Kreiner, Elaine Hollensbe and Mathew Sheep suggest:

...there is a wide range of opinion about how one should conceptualize identity. At the extremes, opinions vary from a structurally oriented approach, which regards identity as stable and fixed, to an action-oriented approach, which regards identity as fluid and malleable (2006, 1317).

Kreiner et al argue that this approach applies to ideas about identity at an individual and organisational level. They also highlight the notion that some aspects of personal identity appear to be more central or likely to be activated depending on factors in an individual's social world (2006, 1317).

Jenkins suggests that since the 1990s four distinct themes have emerged from the literature about identity. These are:

personal self-identity and reflexivity; the variability of identity, as against essentialism⁶⁹ or primordialism; difference as the defining criterion or principle of identification; and the definitive modernity (or non-modernity) of identity discourses, and of the fluidity of identity (Jenkins 2000a, 4).

In terms of ideas about the 'self', Harvie Ferguson discusses the nature of selfhood and asserts that there is a tendency for people to 'tidy up' the messiness of their experiences to form narratives about their lives that imply coherence 'in which the 'self' is the central character' (2009, 7). Ferguson adds that 'selfhood is constructed from experience while, at the same time, it gives experience its characteristic form'

⁶⁹ Like primordialism, essentialism proposes that identity comes from an aspect of a person's nature rather than through their relationships with others and that it is central to that person; identity is therefore fixed and continues regardless of other changes in the social environment (Lawler 2014, 17).

and changes over time and in response to the social world (2009, 7). In other words experiences help shape a person's sense of self but also the significance given to these experiences by the person creates meaning about, for example, their identity. Ferguson also explores the notion of reflexivity which he defines as awareness of different aspects of selfhood – 'as the process either of *mediation* or *synthesis* of apparently opposed terms' (2009, 28). This process is understood as being about all the different aspects of self rather than fragmentation of these parts of self; these parts are held together by the self (Ferguson 2009, 28). In discussing the influence of late Enlightenment ideas about consciousness and self-consciousness, Ferguson suggests the evolution of the notion that: 'self is a synthesis, so its transformation and development is the *self-movement* of the synthesis' (2009, 29).

I now refer to the work of Jennie Barnsley (2013) whose thesis takes a feminist approach to theology and complex gender to explore the link between 'selfhood' and identity. Barnsley builds on the work of Cynthia Ellis (2003) to develop a new gender schema which proposes an alternative conceptual framework to the binary one (2013, 40). Barnsley does this by outlining four ways that individuals recognise themselves and are perceived as being female:

1. By external appearance or looks-like – what Barnsley refers to as l-gender
2. The feeling or sense of being female or f-gender
3. Performing as female or p-gender
4. Other people's perception or judgement that the person is female or j-gender (2013, 40).

Barnsley introduces the term 'metagender' to explore how the four factors work together to create meaning around gender (2013, 40-41), or as Ferguson might express it through a process of *mediation* or *synthesis*. In terms of f-gender, Barnsley asserts that the feeling of being female is not necessarily to do with emotions but rather 'is (possibly) that thing we mean when we talk about 'self' or 'identity'', that is the sense of belonging to the category female (2013, 42-43). Performing gender relates to Judith Butler's ideas (introduced in chapter one) that people act and respond in particular ways to give the appearance of being one of the two gender options to fit appropriate cultural norms (Barnsley 2013, 43). The last category in the schema is concerned with other people's perceptions of a person's gender. Barnsley suggests that if someone is judged by others not to fit the gender binary, for example, in the case of transgendered people, this can have very negative consequences for them (Barnsley 2013, 44). Barnsley argues therefore that 'in order to conform successfully to the dominological requirements of the metagender binary, the four aspects must be congruent' (2013, 45).

I now apply this schema to perceptions of identity in terms of the Protestant/Catholic binary and how it operates in the two Irish states which was discussed in chapter three, and explore how this concept could work in relation to religious identity.

- External appearance – it is not usually possible to know by appearance alone what category people fit in terms of their religious identity. There are other indications such as a person's name (for example, in Catholic families children are traditionally named after saints and surnames would be recognised as culturally 'Irish', those from the Protestant tradition may have names that

reflect their English or Scottish roots), where people live (particularly areas divided by 'peace walls' in Northern Irish cities such as Belfast and Derry), schools attended and use of place names such as Derry or Londonderry (as discussed in chapter one).

- Feeling – one of the themes of this section is the extent to which some forms of identity are core, fixed or fluid. The stability or otherwise of religious and national identity is discussed more fully in section 5.4 onwards.
- Performing – the distinction between being a 'practising' Protestant or Catholic and having religion primarily as part of a cultural identity relates to the intersectionality between religious, political and ethnic identities and how they operate in the Irish context. I explore the expression of cultural religious identity, specifically Catholicism, in the Quaker identity matrix in section 5.5.
- Judgement – unlike Barnsley's example of transgendered people not fitting the gender schema and therefore experiencing negative reactions, the consequences of being judged Catholic or Protestant is not primarily to do with lack of congruence in the schema but rather related to sectarian attitudes on the part of those from the 'other' group.

Overall it can be argued that this schema provides a useful analytical tool for understanding how individuals may experience dissonance between their sense of self and the perceptions of others. In addition, if this schema is also applied to the other categories that make up a person's identity, such as ethnic or national identity, there may be tensions both within and between these categories. This point is explored more fully in section 5.5 and highlights how respondents manage their own apparently contradictory identity labels.

Following on from Barnsley's perspective on complex gender, Lawler similarly argues that identity is best viewed as a process rather than there being fixed categories or identity labels. Lawler states that this position does not propose that categories lack significance rather 'such categories will *inform* (though they may not determine, and they cannot sum up) people's sense of themselves, and how they view one another' (2014, 10). Lawler asserts that instead of identity-making involving a passive process of categorization it can be viewed rather 'in terms of more active processes of *identification*' (2014, 10). Citing the example of gender, Lawler states that identifying with the generic category of gender may involve accepting or rejecting different aspects of this category (2014, 11). Additionally, Lawler asserts that this can be the case with other category labels; in that when compared with the wider category the individual's experience of this label may be contradictory and this has to be managed by them (2014, 11). Lawler goes on to discuss how aspects of an individual's identity may appear to be in tension, referring to the example of 'mother' and 'worker' because of the different and sometimes conflictual expectations of these roles (2014, 12).

Lawler explores identity through its expression in public roles or identity categories and the more personal, reflective and reflexive sense of self (2014, 7). Lawler states that this approach can help to avoid reductionist interpretations which view identity as a list of categories, and asserts that while particular identity categories have significance for individuals and social groups this cannot account for the complexity of identity. For example, individuals manage attachment to different categories and their lived experiences may be different from the public (stereotype) of these categories as outlined in the previous paragraph. Individuals' self-perception may

also not match how they are perceived and positioned by others (2014, 7). Lawler suggests that: 'Any discussion of identity always means that we are in the presence of not one but many persons – or perceptions of a person' (2014, 8).

Lawler states that 'Western' notions of identity are based on the concepts of sameness and difference in relationship to others. This works in the sense that as humans 'we *share* common identities' and that this identification applies, for example, to specific categories such as gender and race (2014, 10). Lawler argues that simultaneously there is another factor in operation which is concerned with what makes us unique, where differences between people are highlighted and that these two modes of identification operate together (2014, 10). In his work about categorisation and identity, Jenkins stresses the powerful impact that labelling has on how identity is internalised (2000b, 8-9). In terms of collective categories Jenkins draws a distinction between group self-recognition – 'a group *for itself*', and one which is defined and categorised by others – 'a category *in itself*', arguing that all groups possess characteristics of both. Jenkins suggests that the experience of being labelled can be positive or negative and tends to produce a response which may strengthen group identity in reaction to the process of categorisation (2000b, 9). Furthermore Jenkins asserts that:

External, or categorical, dimensions of identification are not only vitally important, but they have been underplayed in most theorizations of social identity. Self-identity is only part of the story (and not necessarily the most important part) (2000b, 10).

According to Lawler, some differences in identity arise out of processes of discrimination which value some identity categories above others, so that individuals in these groups experience greater barriers to accessing certain societal benefits

than those in the more valued categories (2014, 13). An example of this was given in chapter three which explored how Catholics experienced structural and social discrimination in Northern Ireland because the state institutions privileged the position of the Protestant community. As Lawler argues: 'not only, then, are all identities relational, but all are produced within systems of inequality' (2014, 14). Lawler, for example, views as central to the nature of the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland the presumption within these communities that there are fundamental differences between Catholics and Protestants. Lawler proposes that the tendency to see ourselves as 'special' and 'unique' leads to processes where commonalities are played down and small differences between people highlighted 'until they then become defining characteristics... until identities come to seem 'opposites'' (2014, 14). Lawler asserts then that identity is not something that belongs 'within' individuals but is a product of interactions between people in a social context (2014, 19).

Like Lawler, Jenkins' work focuses on identity in its relational context, particularly collective identity. Jenkins asserts that human societies function through systems of identification – that is the ability to distinguish between ourselves and others and that identity is usually taken for granted until it becomes problematic due to a situational change (2000a, 6). Jenkins examines this idea in terms of ethnicity which he defines as:

... about collective identification based in perceived cultural differentiation... is concerned with culture but is rooted in – and the product of – social interaction, especially across boundaries...is neither fixed nor static...is both collective and individual, externalised in institutions and patterns of social interaction and internalised in personal self-identification (2000a, 7).

Jenkins explores the link between ethnicity, identity and conflict through two case studies – Protestants in Northern Ireland and Danish attitudes towards the European Union. Taking the example of Northern Ireland, Jenkins asserts that the concept of a shared Protestant identity is a weak one because of diverse factors such as social class, religious denomination and political affiliation. He argues that, for example, supporters of the non-sectarian Alliance Party ‘are no less Protestant’ than those who vote for the strongly sectarian Democratic Unionist Party (2000a, 19). Jenkins suggests, however, that the historic economic benefits from having a Protestant identity are substantial and: ‘Thus, at the very least, defence of Protestant identity necessarily involves a significant pursuit of *perceived interests, and self-interest*’ (2000a, 19). Jenkins concludes that a person's identity does not in itself determine behaviour. What is more relevant is the meaning ascribed to that identity, the economic and political context that the individual is located within, and what is gained by a particular course of action (2000a, 20).

5.2.1. Section summary

This section highlighted some key aspects of identity theory, such as the importance of taking into account primordialist concepts of ‘primary groups’ and their different levels of participation in the ‘system of ultimate values’, and self-perception of identity and what categories are given significance by individuals. From social constructivist theory the focus has been on concepts of ‘selfhood’, discussion of an identity schema, the relational and active processes of identity formation, labelling theory, the valuing of some identity labels over others, and how the creation of ‘difference’ between social groups can result in the formation of ‘oppositional’ identities and violent conflict between groups. Useful insights from primordialism and social

constructivism have contributed to both my understanding of the nature of identity in the two Irish states and the data from my study which is explored more fully in the rest of the chapter. Taking into account the significance that individuals and groups give to their identity, rather than just the identity categories themselves, is a common theme in both perspectives. So for example, I will consider the significance that respondents gave to 'being Quaker' within the political and social context of Ireland, and 'being Quaker' from backgrounds that reflect the diversity of this context. It can therefore be argued that it is not necessary to consider essentialist/primordialist and social constructivist theories of identity as opposing ideas or even alternative theoretical perspectives about social identity; both have made a valuable contribution to this study. I return to this theme again in chapter seven when I discuss the main research findings.

5.3. Identity and sectarianism in Ireland

Chapter three gave an overview of the origins and nature of Irish sectarianism and started to discuss the impact of sectarianism on personal and group identity. This section moves from the general framework outlined in 5.2 which explained the development of 'oppositional' identities to the specific case study of how this operates in Ireland. This subject is explored through a detailed examination of the key findings from research by Todd et al about the nature of identity in the two Irish states. As I outlined in chapter one, Todd's work provides an appropriate locus of comparison because, like my study, it has an all-Ireland context; is about sectarianism and religious/political divisions, identity formation and change, the impact of socio-political structures on identity, and identity and conflict.

5.3.1. Background to Jennifer Todd's research

In her work about religious and national distinctions in Ireland, Todd begins with an outline of the separate development of the two Irish states after partition and the creation of two different types of societies and links this to the impact on the development of individual and collective Catholic and Protestant identities – what Todd calls ‘symbolic distinctions’, (2012, 1). As outlined in chapter three, partition left a very small minority of Protestants in the Irish Free State. In Northern Ireland, by contrast, there was a large minority of Catholics. According to Todd, there was a more settled and stable society in the post-civil war period in the Free State, which has been working towards a more inclusive, equal society. In Northern Ireland there was ongoing violent conflict related to the border issue and structural inequality, particularly after 1969, and there continues to be political strains in the post-Good Friday Agreement (GFA) period from 1998 onwards (2012, 1-2). Table 5.1 shows the contemporary socio-political structure in the Irish states (Todd 2012, 2).

	Northern Ireland	Irish state
Demography Protestant: Catholic	54:44	4:94
Political institutions	Consociational, shared	Majority ethos and dominance
Power resources (informal)	Radical changes towards equality	Stability, minority comfort, schools etc.
Violence	Within memory of most adults	Close to a century ago
Associational life	Contested within populations, still separate but increasing overlap in a new ‘mixed’ realm.	Strong minority associations. Recent opening up so that both minority and high-status majority associations are increasingly mixed.

Table 5.1: The contrasting socio-political structure, North and South

In addition to the factors listed above, Todd states that secularisation is an important trend particularly in the Republic of Ireland (2012, 9).

Todd's research aims to explore 'oppositional' identities and how they function and are negotiated in situations of conflict, to analyse how fluid or frozen identity is and to look for evidence of identity transformation and what personal and structural circumstances are most likely to promote transition away from 'oppositional' identity categories. According to Todd et al, in both Irish states there have been attempts to transform societies' understanding and acceptance of different identities since the Good Friday Agreement, for example, the British identity of unionists in Northern Ireland (2006a, 325).

Todd's main research method is interviews with complementary use of survey data to evaluate the part that religion or ethnicity plays in contested identities and the political perspectives of people in Ireland (Todd 2010, 86). Todd discusses how she goes about this:

I address them through comparative analysis of how religious distinction and its intersection with national, ethnic and class distinction is discussed in 220 open-ended interviews on 'identity' conducted on each side of the Irish border from 2003-2006 by four interviewers, including the author. Over 75 of the interviews were in Northern Ireland (2012, 3).

5.4. Todd et al's main findings

This section outlines the main research findings from the work of Todd et al thematically. I then compare and contrast these themes with my findings in subsequent sections of this chapter.

5.4.1. Disclosure of identity

The first theme relates to the extent to which the people who were interviewed in Todd's study highlighted their national and religious identity. Todd found that the majority of people from a Catholic background in the Republic of Ireland did not volunteer their religious and national identity, a significant number of those that did had lived in Northern Ireland or were not originally from Ireland (2012,3). Conversely, two thirds of the Protestant respondents disclosed their religious and national identity. In Northern Ireland people from both the Catholic and Protestant communities tended to be more open about their religious affiliation and national identity (Todd 2012, 4). However, Todd found that a substantial minority were more guarded about their background because of the politicisation of these identity categories (2012, 4). Todd suggests that volunteering national and religious identity is unrelated to the importance given by the respondents to these categories (2012, 5). Todd asserts that the key issue related to disclosure is to do with the sensitivity, status and stigmatization of identity categories and how these impact on individuals. Todd argues that these three factors are interlinked (2012, 5). For example, one explanation for the difference in disclosure of identity in the two Irish states is to do with the concept of banal identity; if a group is in the majority (as is the case for Irish Catholics in the Republic of Ireland) certain aspects of identity are taken for granted and therefore not mentioned (Todd 2012, 5).

However, Todd argues that:

Within the majority Irish, Catholic population in the Irish state, the default national categories were called into play for strategic reasons. Being Irish and (to a much lesser extent in the present, but important in the past) being Catholic are signs of status and right to participate in the society...and by those stigmatised on other criteria – Irish travellers, objectively the most

disadvantaged group in the Irish state, strongly emphasised their Irish and Catholic identity (2012, 6).

However, there was evidence that some people refused to put themselves in any of national or religious categories as a way of avoiding sectarian labels. Todd et al refer to one respondent's response to the issue of identity categorisation: '...the impossibility – for him – of a national designation that avoided opposition led him to a principled privatizing' (2006a, 333). This theme recurs again when I discuss the response of respondents in my study to the issue of identity disclosure.

5.4.2. 'Symbolic boundaries/distinctions'

The second theme is about the creation of 'symbolic boundaries' and how 'insider/outsider' status is conferred. Looking first at how this operates in the Republic of Ireland, Todd et al state that surveys consistently show that the majority of people identify themselves as Irish including the very small Protestant minority – many of whom were originally British before Ireland was partitioned (2006a, 326).⁷⁰ Todd, however, argues that religious and political distinctions operate as 'symbolic boundaries' and although they function differently in the two Irish states, have the same outcome in terms of some people feeling excluded from full participation in 'Irish' culture and society despite measures to redress structural inequality (2012, 11).

In the Republic of Ireland a number of significant factors regarding participation were identified by the respondents in Todd's study, these include:

⁷⁰ This point highlights the distinction between self-identity and how individuals are categorised and identified by others. The Quakers I interviewed in the Republic of Ireland identified themselves as Irish. However, they also mentioned that in the past it had been common to refer to Protestants as 'west Brits'. This was viewed as a derogatory term used because of the association between Protestantism, Britishness and colonialism.

- Feeling part of Irish culture, e.g. language, sport, significant Catholic rituals that were predominant in society. Some from non-Catholic backgrounds felt like ‘outsiders’ excluded from these aspects of Irish society.
- The sense that people relate to each other differently in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and England – this was particularly highlighted by people living in the border areas of the Republic of Ireland.
- The history of the state and relationship to this through family connections and having ownership of this history.
- Identifying with the 26 county boundaries of the state. A large minority of respondents in the Republic excluded those in Northern Ireland from being ‘Irish’.
- Identifying with the projected image of Ireland abroad.
- Connection with the ancient country of Ireland through ancestry, essentially the male line, this was mentioned by Catholics and Protestants alike.
- Only a small number of older respondents mentioned that Catholicism was an essential element of being Irish (2012, 11-12).

As Todd suggests, these factors contribute to ideas about who are the ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ in terms of belonging to the Irish nation (2012, 13). Commentators such as Elaine Moriarty extend the concept of ‘outsider’ status to focus on Irishness and race (2005). She argues that the migration of non-EU nationals to Ireland is increasingly seen to be problematic. Moriarty asserts ‘that the State has consistently demonstrated its intent to reinforce the white, settled nature of what it means to be Irish, utilising governmental technologies of the law and gender’ (2005, 5.1). Moriarty is referring here, for example, to concerns expressed by an Irish government

minister, and widely reproduced in the media at the time, about pregnant asylum seekers coming to Ireland in order to 'take advantage' of Irish health and welfare services (2005, 5.4).

In terms of how 'symbolic boundaries' operate in Northern Ireland, Todd argues that the main factors that reinforce societal divisions are religion, nationality and political affiliation which are a potent force when combined. When national and religious categories were discussed by Todd's respondents the following points were made:

- The Protestant/Catholic division is always significant even when challenged.
- Sectarian-based cultural, educational and religious organisations which institutionalise divisions play a significant role in society. Some people try to find alternative cross-community associations.
- Societal divisions are reflected in different narratives in which political history combine with complex family connections to that history.
- There is an awareness of national boundaries with the Republic of Ireland and belonging to the British state – this was mainly highlighted by working-class Protestants (2012, 14).

Todd et al stress the importance of regional differences on the island and how, for example, an Irish Catholic from Northern Ireland moving to the Republic can feel a sense of cultural dislocation or be made to feel different because of their 'northern' culture when many of their reference points are 'British' (2006a, 332). This chimes with observations made by some respondents in my study that they have a greater awareness of their cultural roots when they are at Quaker events in a different part of Ireland away from their 'home' Meeting.

As outlined earlier, Todd found that awareness of religious distinction was significant in both parts of Ireland. However, the way that religious divisions related to nationality, social structures and class is very different in each state. In the Republic the research showed that there was a strong sense of national identity which is inclusive of southern Protestants, less so of people in Northern Ireland and closed to English/British people living in the country (2012, 16). Todd suggests that in Northern Ireland it is the way that Catholic/Protestant divisions and their associated cultural practices come to the fore that produces a 'them' and 'us' barrier between the communities (2012, 16). Todd's work discusses whether these distinctions are religious or national or actually ethnic ones. She asserts that certain aspects could be thought of as related to ethnicity but there were no clear boundaries in the two Irish states around these issues – they are in a state of flux and situational (2012, 16). Todd suggests that respondents in both parts of Ireland live with a position of duality in their everyday lives – between a sense of belonging to a certain religious/national category and positioning themselves in the light of new experiences and interactions. Depending on certain institutional features these distinctions become more totalising (2012, 17). One example of this given by Todd relates to the position of traditional evangelicals in Northern Ireland whose identity and religious beliefs are integrated and informed their political stance in relation to the defence of a Protestant state and loyalty to the British monarch, especially prior to 1998 (2010, 88).

As Todd asserts in respect of Northern Ireland:

Positioning oneself to define the parameters of interaction and debate remain a daily task. Everyone risks disadvantage, if not exclusion, in this negotiation. There are multiple small 'we's – republicans and evangelicals and local communities – but wider 'we's are continually redefined except in those moments for those individuals for whom the set of distinctions come to cohere

into one big totalising division. When it happens it is a Catholic vs. Protestant distinction that becomes pervasive, incorporating into itself simplified national, political and institutional binaries (2012, 15).

5.4.3. Changes in identity

The third theme is concerned with changes in identity content and category. In chapter one I introduced Todd's arguments about identity being 'thick' or 'thin' which depended on the extent to which individuals have a fixed or embedded sense of identity. In Northern Ireland, Todd et al argue that it is possible to detect a movement away from a fixed cultural identity in both communities to what they refer to as a 'thinner state-centred identity' with some seeing themselves as Northern Irish rather than British or Irish (2006a, 326). Todd et al found that where there is 'thick' sense of national identity – and this varies situationally when individuals have a more complex, hybrid type of identity – true fluidity is unusual (2006a, 328). Todd suggests that:

Hybridity involves a functional variation in the use of identity categories, with different categories used in different situations, for different purposes: in our study it coexisted with very precise, distinct and stable referents for each category and sometimes an insistence that categories acceptable in one context not be transferred to another (2006a, 329).

According to Todd, Protestants on the island (especially in Northern Ireland) have always had a number of categories of nationality to choose from and this is increasingly the case for Northern Irish Catholics. This was legally recognised by the Good Friday Agreement which guaranteed the right to be Irish, British or both (Todd et al 2006a, 329). However, William Neill asserts that:

The argument is made that, because of the constitutional architecture of the Belfast Agreement, which used the reality of deep cultural division as its major building block, sectarian division in Northern Ireland is as wide as ever (2006, 197).

Neill appears to be suggesting that the Good Friday Agreement unwittingly served to entrench institutional boundaries through its policy of 'parity of esteem'.

Todd et al's overall findings about changes in national identity in Northern Ireland are that:

Significant numbers in our study had a categorically complex national identity, of a form sometimes said to show a new hybridity and fluidity in identification. We begin the analysis of category change by showing that categorically complex identities are compatible with deeply embedded dispositions of identification, such that one and only one category is deemed appropriate in each type of situation and variation is not tolerated. Fluidity – in the interesting and substantive sense of ability to fluctuate between (seemingly) opposed categories, reference points, and the whole repertoires that go with them – is very rare (2006a, 329).

Todd et al argue that this is because changes in identity category can be extremely difficult – if it is easy this is because the new identity label is not 'loaded' – and is more likely to happen because of significant events pushing individuals to re-evaluate their sense of identity (2006a, 331). Furthermore, identity change can have a negative impact on relationships with others as is illustrated by a quote from a respondent in my study:

It was the sense that I was a traitor to my community...I left the Workers Party in my twenties. I had just got to the stage where a conversation had been going on in the office...and as I walked in it stopped so abruptly...one of the things I had known probably from the time I was 17, was that I hadn't been asked to become a member of the army (The IRA). Yet I knew that some of my friends were...the realisation as to why because I wasn't toeing the party line. I had a different view. I never felt offended by that, I was quite relieved by it. I never felt that I wanted that...if they were having conversations, conversations would stop and all that subterfuge going on that I was aware of and I suddenly realised that I did not belong here. One of the consequences of my abandoning it was that I lost all my closest friends...

Research showed that although change in identity *category* was rare, there had been a substantial change in the *content* of national identity (Todd et al 2006a, 334).

Rather than the content of national identity being defined mainly by the community people identified with, the main drivers now appear to be generational changes, personal experiences and other factors (Todd et al 2006a, 335). For example, in the

Republic of Ireland this could be to do with disenchantment with the Roman Catholic Church, and in both of the Irish states the influence of membership of the European Union or as a way of identifying with or distancing themselves from key political issues such as the conflict in Northern Ireland (Todd et al 2006a, 335).

Todd et al refer to situations where respondents, who had previously had a banal form of identity, had a difficult experience with someone from the 'other' community or, for example, in Northern Ireland, a Protestant respondent who witnessed the brutal murder of two British soldiers in 1988 on television. These events acted as a trigger for these respondents to re-examine their identity and ultimately they became attached to a more embedded, oppositional identity (2006a, 336-337). Many of these people had previously been open to non-sectarian attitudes, behaviours and friendships. For some it led to a process of essentializing differences and the creation of 'otherness' (Todd et al 2006a, 338). Todd et al suggest that reversion to oppositional identities was more common than shifts away from these forms of identity (2006a, 339).

5.4.4. 'Moral' Nationalism

The fourth theme is about the possible emergence of a different form of national identity exemplified by findings from a research study carried out by Todd et al in 2004 in the border area of the Republic of Ireland. It was concluded from the study that there is another form of Nationalism other than ethnic, civic or banal – that is 'moral' Nationalism – and that this points to the possibility of greater fluidity and negotiation of national identity in 'imagined national boundaries' than in state-centred ones (Todd et al 2006b, 366). The research findings did not match expectations that

there would be a more fluid, transgressive sense of national identity in the border areas with possible openness to a hybrid European identity (Todd et al 2006b, 369). Findings from the interview data suggest that the border was not institutionalised, rather a place to be negotiated and that there was no impact of the border on the respondents' sense of identity (Todd et al 2006b, 372). This was a common finding with both Catholic and Protestant respondents and across different generations (Todd et al 2006b, 372). Both communities had a clear sense of Irishness, although it was expressed differently. Protestants would sometimes add another label such as Irish Presbyterian and expressed their sense of being in a minority (Todd et al 2006b, 379).

Todd et al found that the border was conceptualised as a moral force rather than an institutionalised one, meaning that the values of civility and peacefulness constituted the real border – keeping at bay what was considered to be the intrusions of northern-related conflict. The border was regarded as alien because it was imposed by force. People from both communities had a sense of their Irishness being challenged by the conflict and there was a moral exclusion of those who supported the violence (2006b, 379). Respondents expressed a very strong sense that the two Irish states were very different culturally and pointed to what they regarded as greater civility and openness in the south compared to the north where people were perceived to be more rigid and harsh in how they presented themselves (Todd et al 2006b, 382-383). There were also comments made about the impact of northern refugees from the Troubles bringing their 'problematic' culture with them (Todd et al 2006b, 383). Todd et al argue that this concept of 'moral' Nationalism could be extended more widely across the Irish nation and that:

To understand how Irish nationalism functions today in the Irish state requires a refocus of attention from explicit ideology to the normative content of national identity. The values and principles which are central to self-esteem may also reproduce a moral nationalism and ensure that it retains its personal relevance... These moral-national boundaries are fluid: where they are placed depends on who is challenging them. They fluctuate over time and with events. This raises a new agenda for the analysis of nationalism in Ireland, requiring analysis not simply of the South but of North-South contrasts, challenges and interrelations (2006b, 380).

Todd et al also go on to assert that ideas about 'moral' Nationalism have wider significance beyond Ireland suggesting that:

Nationalist discourses in many societies take on a democratizing, liberal form just as articulations of liberalism and justice may have national boundaries... This is not simply a recent phenomenon: for example, post-second world war British identity incorporated welfarist values and social citizenship (2006b, 380).

This theme is developed further in chapter eight which considers the extent to which supra-national identities such as European or the national identities of British and French act as meta or overarching identities that are inclusive of other forms of identity, and help to reduce identity-related conflict within these societies.

Todd also suggests that: '...it is only when institutional changes are accompanied by changing self-perceptions that new institutions begin to create new dynamics of interaction' (2005, 429). She argues that the consequence of this not occurring is that the older conflict causes embedded meanings to become absorbed into new institutional structures and systems (Todd 2005, 430). It could be argued that, for example, this is the case in Northern Ireland. The political reforms introduced following the 1998 political settlement have to a certain extent contained sectarian conflict but not removed it.

In terms of the process of essentialism – Todd et al assert that where there is a history of sectarian division and damaging encounters between people from different communities, a return to opposition and movement towards essentialization becomes more likely; that ‘essentialization is a psychologically plausible and fully intelligible path of reaction to stigmatization which may also affect those who are willing to blur boundaries’ (2006a, 340). Todd et al argue that the only way to prevent this process of essentialisation from happening is having measures to overcome institutional injustice; to provide means of redress to those who have experienced violation of their human rights, and ultimately organising societies in ways that tackle the triggers leading to oppositional identities (2006a, 341). Changes within the culture of social organisations are also essential in addition to those at a macro-level. As will be argued in chapter six, I found that IYM has its own mechanisms for avoidance of essentialization, including the all-Ireland structure of the Society and opportunities for gatherings of Friends which helped to break down the boundaries between the different traditions within the Yearly Meeting. I also discuss the culture of Quakerism and the extent to which it has positioned itself as a ‘third way’ between sectarian identity categories.

5.4.5. Section summary

This section set out the background to Todd’s study of national and religious identity in the two Irish states. The principal findings were presented through an exploration of four main themes, namely: issues around disclosure of identity, the creation of ‘symbolic distinctions’, changes in the category and content of personal identity and lastly findings about the concept of ‘moral’ Nationalism and the impact this could have on future analysis of Irish Nationalism. The section concluded with examples of

measures to counter the process of essentialization in divided societies, and the necessity of addressing triggers for the development of 'oppositional' identities at different levels of society. Section 5.5 onwards links the findings of the research outlined above with my study of the identity of Quakers in Ireland.

5.5. Quaker identity matrix

In this section I begin to explore some of the themes from my research findings through a matrix representing different aspects of Quaker identity. I then go on to look at a number of these themes in more depth using case studies drawn from the interviews.

The diverse nature of this small religious group is illustrated by the 22 identity labels gathered from the 15 interviews I carried out between 2011 and 2012. They have been loosely divided into two categories: national/cultural and religious. As I have indicated in the last row of the table 5.2, one category fits both headings. I outline the reasons why in section 5.6.1.

National/Cultural	Religious
Nationalist/Republican	Dissenter
Working-class background	'Birthright'
Irish	Quaker by 'convincement'
British/Irish	Evangelical
English	Christo-centric
Culturally-Catholic	Liberal
No label	Christian
Socialist/feminist	Born Again Christian
Gay man	Humanist
Irish speaker	Exploring mysticism
	Seeker
Quaker not Protestant	Quaker not Protestant

Table 5.2: Identity Labels

Figure 5.3 gives an example of an individual's somewhat complex 'hybrid' identity – red represents national/cultural identity, black theological position. This respondent is a Quaker by 'convincement' and from a Catholic, nationalist/republican background on the liberal spectrum of Quakerism who is exploring mystical forms of spirituality. He rejected the label Protestant and was very clear that he remains culturally-Catholic. The different identity labels point to a possible conflict of identity; these themes will be explored more fully in the case studies. There have been an increasing number of people from a Catholic background becoming Quakers in recent years which has had an impact on the culture of the Society. Chapter six looks at cultural-Catholicism in the broader context of IYM.

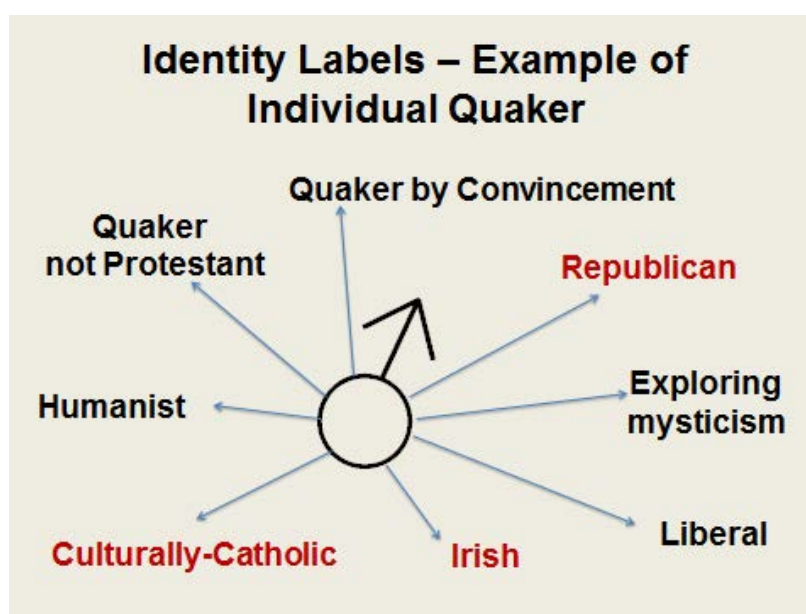


Figure 5.3: Example of an Individual Identity Matrix

Figure 5.4 shows some of the identity labels relating to four of the evangelical Friends that I interviewed. The distinction between those from Quaker families ('birthright' Friends) and Quakers by 'convincement' is marked – and linked to the early Quaker dynastic families who were important in holding the Society together

after partition. Dissenters are Friends who emphasis their different roots from mainstream Protestantism, that is, from the dissenting or nonconformist tradition. The respondent (labelled C in figure 5.4) who described herself as Christo-centric⁷¹ is possibly avoiding the Quaker evangelical and liberal binary which has caused some tension in the Society (this is covered more fully in chapter six). The arrows in the diagram show connections between three of the evangelical Friends and concerted attempts to build bridges with liberal Friends, particularly by the person at the bottom right of the diagram (labelled D). The respondent who described himself as a Quaker fundamentalist (labelled B) seemed to be less connected to the other evangelical Friends. He expressed a strong opinion that the Society is straying too far from its theological roots. This respondent was not willing to disclose his national identity and articulated his deep attachment to the Irish language.

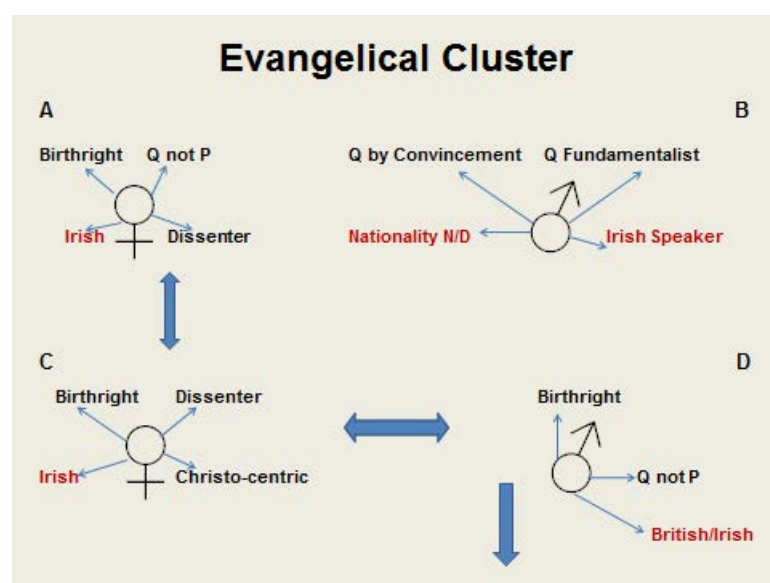


Figure 5.4: Identity Matrix – Evangelical Quakers

⁷¹ Christo-centric - having Christ at the centre.

A quote from a 'birthright' Friend illustrates the complexity of her identity and sense of being in a very small minority in the Republic of Ireland:

I'm Irish. I'm in a minority because I'm not Catholic. I'm in a minority because I don't like being called a Protestant, I'm a Dissenter. I'm in a minority because I am a Member of the Religious Society of Friends. I'm in a minority because I'm an evangelical Irish Friend and I'm quite happy with it.

Liberal Friends used a variety of terms to describe themselves. For example, one mentioned being a born again Christian when they discovered Quakerism but not in the sense of being evangelical. The respondents who described themselves as Republican or from a Republican background (labelled A and D in figure 5.5) represented a spectrum of political perspectives from a background in the military tradition to the constitutional one. Some respondents commented that the Religious Society of Friends has a mainly middle-class membership and those with a different class background tended to emphasise this difference as evidenced by reference to w-c (working class) backgrounds (labelled B and D). Tweed asserts that religion can facilitate the crossing of social space, for example, in terms of class (2006, 134). However, for some Irish Friends joining a predominantly middle-class grouping caused them to feel uncomfortable about this aspect of Quakerism. A desire to challenge the assumption that all Quakers were middle-class was part of the motivation for one respondent's (labelled D) decision to be interviewed, as the following quote shows:

One of the reasons when I received the email that [I thought] maybe it's time to talk, because the perception is that Quakers are solely a middle-class cohort who are all out of the same mould, well I'm not part of that and I wasn't part of that.

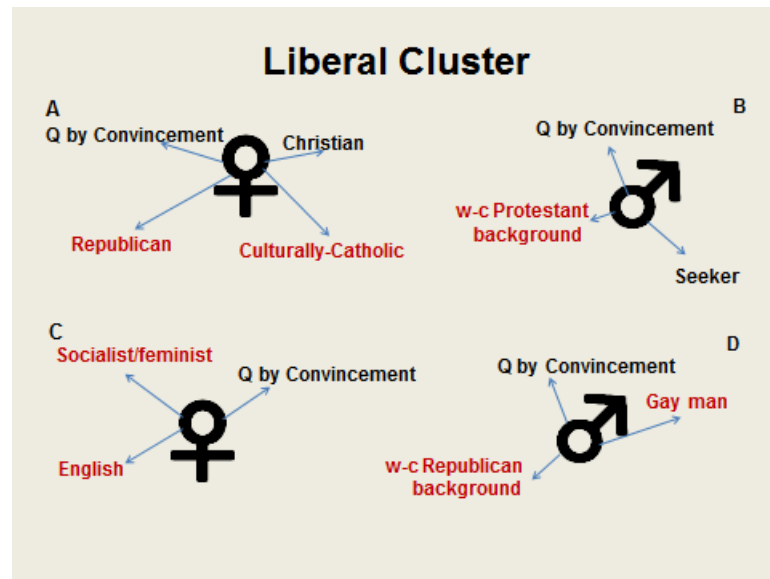


Figure 5.5: Identity Matrix – Liberal Quakers

Figure 5.6 shows what happens when all these identity labels are put together and demonstrates the complexities and potential conflict of these identities. In the matrix there appear to be a number of ‘oppositional’ identity labels. For example, at the top of the diagram, separated from the others, is the category Unionist/Protestant which contrasts with ‘Quaker not Protestant’; this is an example of how Friends across the Yearly Meeting perceived each other. None of the respondents interviewed described themselves as unionist or Protestant, but in the interviews there were many references to evangelical Friends in the rural areas of Northern Ireland being identified with the unionist community around them. Some Friends felt that this tradition had been in the ascendancy within Irish Quakerism until fairly recently. Other potential binary categories include Irish/English and evangelical/liberal.

Quakers in Ireland: Identity Matrix

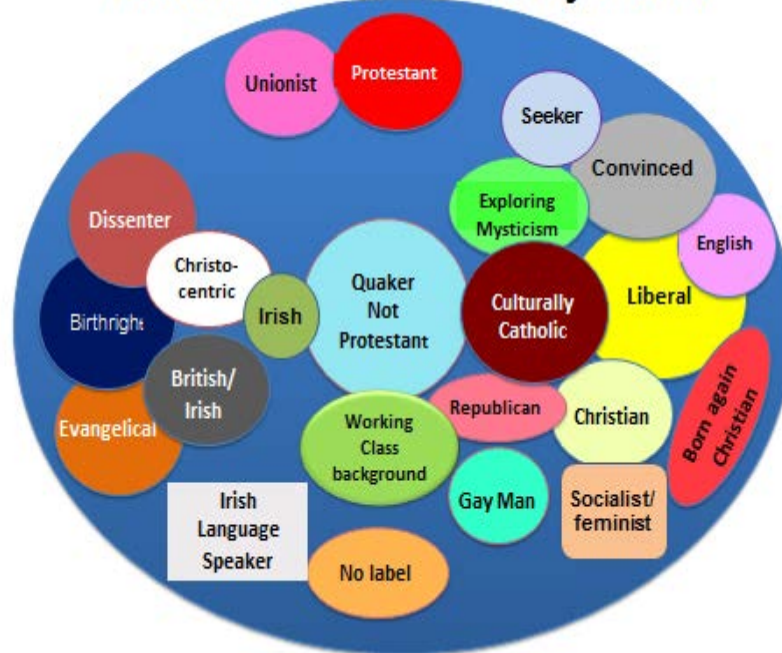


Figure 5.6: Quakers in Ireland Identity Matrix

In recent years there has been a shift from political differences in the Society to contention about homosexuality and same sex relationships. This has caused great tension between those Friends who are more biblically-based in their theology and those using the language of the testimonies to truth and equality. One respondent shared his experience of ‘coming out’ to other Quakers:

One of the things that Quakerism teaches you is honesty and the importance of truth. It’s a very big thing for Quakerism and it was one of the things that it taught me, and so for years I grappled with this whole concept of truth and the importance of being true...But you can only – you can’t be truthful to the world unless you’re truthful to yourself...and I spent a good many years trying to deal with the issue of being truthful to myself and one of the outcomes of it was that I came out as a gay man and that was a particularly – it turned out to be subsequently particularly difficult in my Meeting – very difficult and very uncomfortable.

The way that IYM has managed conflict related to the different political and theological backgrounds of Friends is explored more fully in chapter six.

5.6. Comparison of findings about identity

This section compares Todd's findings about disclosure of identity and 'symbolic distinctions' with the findings from my study. Changes in identity content and category, and challenges to sectarianism are covered in the case studies in section 5.7 onwards. The extent to which Quakerism represents an alternative to sectarian identities or a meta-identity is discussed in chapters six and seven.

5.6.1. Disclosure of identity

In terms of disclosure of religious identity, one of the common themes that came out strongly from the identity matrix is that all of the respondents described themselves as Quaker not Protestant hence the central place of this label in figure 5.6. This finding is related to the identity label Protestant being 'loaded' in the Irish context and also because Quakerism came out of the dissenting tradition. As was outlined in chapter three, Protestantism is not just a religious label, it is also a political category associated with the Protestant Ascendancy and British colonialism and that's why Quaker not Protestant appears in both categories in figure 5.2. This quote encapsulates these observations:

I don't see myself as Protestant, no I don't. I see myself as somebody who seeks to adhere to certain Christian values...I wouldn't tick any boxes. Although when the census forms came in I did write Religious Society of Friends, but I wouldn't tick boxes I wouldn't...we are talking about sectarianism on an island and that's the reason we look at it as we do but we shouldn't have to look at it in those terms. So I just see myself as a person who tries to live according to certain Christian values...But I don't advocate, I don't proclaim what I am or who I am. People will obviously, certainly in the Northern Ireland situation, will perceive me as a nationalist and as a Roman Catholic yes, that doesn't worry me. It worries them possibly more than it worries me. But it can be, it would be difficult for me to live in Northern Ireland.

Findings about disclosure of national identity are more mixed. Some respondents did avoid self-categorisation and these tended to be originally from non-Irish

backgrounds – one said that he was unwilling to disclose his nationality, saying that ‘it wasn’t important’. Respondents from Catholic backgrounds seemed to have a more banal sense of national identity – conversely ‘birthright’ Friends highlighted their Irish identity. Other respondents talked about their experience of being English in the Republic and Northern Ireland. This quote from a respondent in Northern Ireland illustrates the link between nationality and cultural identity:

It’s because I’m an English person with a Protestant background that I did not have the connection with the cultural Protestantism of Northern Ireland – that’s linked with Unionism, the Orange Order and Loyal Orders and whatever ... There’s a significant section of the Protestant community who don’t associate with that culture either, but most people who have been brought up Protestant in Northern Ireland would have had, within their family, those connections through cousins, brothers, sisters, uncles, grandparents. I had none of that so that’s why I wasn’t a cultural Protestant.

The issue of cultural identity is also connected to that of ‘symbolic distinctions’ and my findings about how they operate in the two Irish states which is the subject of the next section.

5.6.2. ‘Symbolic distinctions/boundaries’

My study generally matches Todd’s findings about ‘symbolic distinctions’ and the creation of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ groups, and also produces new insights about how these are addressed. For example, respondents raised as Catholic in the Republic of Ireland seem to have a greater sense of belonging culturally in Irish society than those from different Christian traditions. This concurs with Todd’s findings about groups who are in the majority having a more taken for granted or banal identity. However, I found that respondents from a Catholic background were more likely to stress that they remained culturally-Catholic. What seems to be significant in terms of the identity of these respondents is how their cultural-Catholicism is connected to

being Irish, despite moving to a different theological affiliation, and to sensitivities about being seen as members of a 'Protestant' denomination. A respondent expressed their understanding of what cultural-Catholicism means in a political or sectarian context in the following quote:

I think it's much more to do with cultural tribalism than it has to do with actual faith. I actually don't think it's a faith thing at all... a typical example of it is the Celtic Rangers thing. You see it so... and it's very obvious how you know the tribalism of Catholicism and you talk to people. If you look at Republicanism in the south of Ireland it has no affinity with Catholicism now, but if you look at [it] in the north they are so intertwined you know and they've become one and the same thing in one sense you know in parts, but it's much more a tribal thing.

Another respondent reflecting on the sectarian nature of religious identity in Northern Ireland commented that:

In our Meeting we have quite a few people who are ex-Catholics who are now part of our Meeting. It's becoming easier for people to change from one denomination to another. At one time it could have been seen by many people as betraying your community to attend a Church of another denomination...I think that is much less so now – particularly in the south of Ireland.

My study also showed that culturally-Catholic respondents had to contend with other people's perceptions of Quakerism as an essentially British institution and this caused them to feel uncomfortable about this aspect of their chosen identity, as the following quote illustrates:

...but by and large they are seen as British especially by the Irish speaking public...I was talking about some of the things we are talking about now and I talked about my own membership of the Quakers...and the reasons I had gone in. I was saying that I felt that there was no future for the Vatican – that its power was contrary to the Gospel – and at the end a lady said to me... 'there isn't a future for the Quakers here' she said 'they're British' and because I wasn't expecting the remark and I wasn't ready for it and I did not know what to say...So I think I just stayed quiet and said nothing. But she was telling me that I had joined a British group.

However, as this respondent went on to say, the experience of mixing with Quakers from a different background had enabled her to rethink negative perceptions about Britishness:

I can now talk to them and it has been a wonderful experience for me learning about Britishness and realising that Britishness carries huge integrity with it because I was brought up in school to think that the British were bad.

Findings about respondents who are cultural-Catholic are also very significant in the context of identity category change which Todd found was fairly unusual. These respondents had taken on a new religious identity and retained symbolic aspects of their previous identity – there was some dissonance between the two aspects of their identity which had to be managed by them.

Respondents who were not culturally-Catholic or were originally from non-Irish backgrounds talked about feeling like ‘outsiders’ at times for a number of reasons. For example, some respondents referred to Catholic ‘sectarianism’ in the Republic of Ireland, giving the example of the *Ne Temere* decree of 1908⁷² which operated in both of the Irish states. According to the respondents this had a major impact on Catholic/Protestant relations, was very divisive and contributed to separate development of the communities, as the following quotes show with reference to the Republic of Ireland:

When I came back from England in 1969 I joined the local Church of Ireland table tennis club and Roman Catholics weren’t allowed to be members at that stage. Even if there was an interchurch couple the Catholic partner wasn’t allowed to be a member and this was to do with the rules and regulations, because the Church of Ireland said that if you are going to play it that way we’ll play it this way and so interchurch marriages weren’t encouraged between Protestant and Catholics in that way.

⁷² This papal decree meant that before permission could be granted to a Catholic wanting to marry a non-Catholic in a religious wedding, the non-Catholic partner had to give an undertaking that any children born to the couple would be raised as Catholics (Mitchell 2006, 16).

... and of course nobody went to each other's Churches. Nobody went to each other's funerals. I don't think they even went into each other's houses and part of it, a large part of it I think, even when I was a teenager, was the Ne Temere decree.

One respondent reflected on the sense that her 'Irishness' had to be substantiated:

But there's always a question – and this is the sort of sectarianism of Catholics – if you are really Irish if you're not Catholic? If you're Catholic you don't really have to do anything. If you're Protestant you have to prove yourself by speaking Irish or becoming a member of a group that is overtly Irish nationalist otherwise you are still asked questions.

However, another respondent felt that Irish identity has become more inclusive:

I think the non-Catholic population are possibly feeling more Irish. I mean we used to be regarded and to some extent regard ourselves as being what we call west Brits and I think that is gone for a number of reasons... The president Mary McAleese⁷³ was very popular and very skilful and I think quite a lot was due to her.

The Irish language was very important to some respondents (especially those not originally from Ireland) – partly as a way of feeling part of the 'nation' but they also saw themselves as challenging the way that Irish Nationalism had claimed the language and culture as belonging to the Gaelic, that is Catholic people, when it was originally much more non-sectarian and inclusive. This point is illustrated by the following quote:

There was a split there you see, because you had Douglas Hyde,⁷⁴ he wanted to have like a cultural Nationalism you know that would include everyone but political types like Pádraic Pearce wanted to politicise it. I think one of the worst things ever was the IRA tried to push Irish as being part of their political agenda because it belongs to everyone. I had the pleasure earlier this year, I was at a Presbyterian service in Belfast in Irish, and there were more than 40 or 50 people at it and it was just so lovely to see that.

One respondent expressed her deep frustration that the Irish language was only taught at Catholic schools:

73 The President of the Republic of Ireland from 1997-2011.

74 Douglas Hyde was the President of the Gaelic League founded in 1893 and a Protestant. The League sought to open up Irish culture to both Catholics and Protestants. However, Elliott asserts that although the League was successful in breaking down some aspects of sectarianism, it did not manage to undermine the prevailing association of Catholicism with Irishness (2009, 38).

Look I'm a Quaker, why should I have to send my daughter to a Catholic school, a school that's under Catholic patronage when we're not Catholic? We just want an Irish speaking school and the patronage should be open to all denominations. And the reaction from Catholics was 'well if you get enough Protestants together you can have your own.' Well I don't want my own. I want everybody to be together. I want inter-denominational education and that's one thing about Quaker schools is that they are open to all dominations.⁷⁵

Another respondent in Northern Ireland talked about the difficulty of integrating different aspects of her identity (especially political ones) within Quakerism which relates to how 'symbolic distinctions' also operate within IYM (this subject is explored in the next chapter). She mentioned that her need for political and social activism was drawn from elsewhere and Meeting for Worship was important for her spiritual journey; but more recently this has changed because there is a greater focus in Irish Quakerism now on issues such as environmentalism and economic injustice.

The next section develops the theme of sectarianism and respondents' experiences during the 'Troubles'.

5.7. Reflections about the 'Troubles'

Many respondents had very vivid memories of the 'Troubles'. Below is a selection of quotes from the interviews that illustrate both the impact on respondents' everyday lives and their understanding of the conflict.

I've got very strong memories of Bloody Sunday. I can still remember sitting around the radio hearing the impact of that. The school was right in the centre of Belfast...The teachers saying that within a hundred yards of the school, 300 bombs had gone off. And I suppose as a child, as a young person, you know, it was very normal to have bombs going off all around the place. And there was trouble ...it must have been terrible for my parents...life was very curtailed as a teenager. You could not go out to social activities. It was very much, had to be curtailed a lot and I think that was, you know, a great pity...I

⁷⁵ However some of the respondents do not approve of Quaker schools because they are fee paying and this does not accord with their values.

was very conscious of the 'Troubles'. I was very interested in history and politics. I was very interested in the situation. But you know, I was very fortunate, I wasn't personally impacted...but undoubtedly it was the big issue of life.

...you did not mix that way and I suppose I feel very angry about that. I think it's...the role of the state to give children opportunities to mix. It's a moral duty of all Churches to make sure that they [do] and that requires them to integrate schools and that was where life was. You know it was just the nature of where we were. Northern Ireland was very denominational at that time.

I come from a working class background and I grew up on the Shankill Road which was the heartland of kind of Protestantism so I'm very much aware of it. I was fortunate in that my parents were determined that both my brother and I would have a grammar school education. So that really helped us to kind of I suppose move on in areas that perhaps other people in the street that I lived did not have the opportunity to do. But in a sense why I'm saying it is because I feel I have an understanding of some of the behaviour and the responses and the way people have reacted to situations partly because of that.

I was 18 years of age that year and I was a member of the Girl Guides and my bus was stoned and I had kids on holiday in Newcastle and our bus was the first bus to be stoned...the year was 1969...I think it might have been the 10th of July. We had been up there for the month of July with the kids and we were coming home on the 10th of July and the bus was stoned...It was years before I went across the border again.

The next quote is from a respondent about her experiences of visiting Northern Ireland during the 'Troubles' and her observation about how things have changed since the political settlement.

We were stopped at crossing points which they'd stop every so often and somebody warned us never to run away from, if you got to them and you turned around and ran away they'd shoot. I don't know if that's true or not, but we would wait and as soon as we spoke they just passed you without asking anything more, it was acceptable. One thing I did notice was that these soldiers were incredibly young and frightened to death. We'd be walking along the road and one of them would suddenly put his gun up like this and in his face was fear. And I thought I could quite see him shooting people by accident because he was so frightened...but since then going back there on a holiday with my daughter and we found it lovely, no borders, no police, no checkpoints – you crossed the border without knowing you'd crossed the border.

Attendance at Meeting for Worship for some Friends in Northern Ireland was at times a challenging experience during the 'Troubles'. This quote from a respondent visiting

Bessbrook Quaker Meeting, neatly summarises both the unusual situation of Quakers holding a 'silent' Meeting for Worship and the difficulty non-Quakers had in identifying where Quakers 'fit' in terms of the sectarian divide:

I remember going to Bessbrook again – having to pass through checkpoints to go to Meeting for Worship and then we were in the Meeting for Worship which would normally be silent and there were these helicopters low overhead – the presence of the English army was there continuously. One of the Quakers said, 'oh you don't have to take any notice of them. They're protecting us'. And another person said at that time that she did not know if the local people liked Quakers because they could not make up their mind what side they were on.

The next section discusses the theme raised in this quote about Quakers and 'what side they were on'.

5.7.1. Sectarianism and the positioning of Quakers

This section considers my findings about how Quakers in Ireland positioned themselves in terms of the sectarian divide. Irish Quakers were faced with issues concerning religion, national identity and political affiliation and some of them identified with Nationalism and others with Unionism. However, I found that a number of Quakers sought to downplay the 'Protestant' roots of Quakerism in order to navigate a middle path between Catholic and Protestant sectarianism, and the respondents that I interviewed showed little evidence of 'oppositional' or 'thick' identities. The following quote from a respondent reflecting on a question that his children asked about their religious identity, encapsulates this finding:

I remember when we came back from (name of country) and they went to the Friends school, that inevitable thing when they came back after the first week and they asked are we Protestants or are we Catholics? Well we explained that they actually were Quakers.⁷⁶

In the next section I focus on what having a Quaker identity represents for two of the respondents: 'Peter' who lives in Northern Ireland and 'Sean' in the Republic of

⁷⁶ In a Quaker school of about 1200 students only 5 or 6 were Quakers, interview with an Irish Quaker in 2011.

Ireland. (All the names in these case studies have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the respondents). I give examples of the way in which these respondents challenged their own sectarianism and sectarianism in the wider community. I contrast Peter and Sean's narratives and look at what they have in common in terms of their Quaker identity. I argue that their accounts demonstrate evidence of identity fluidity and change. I conclude the section by exploring a form of identity that is arguably neither Catholic nor Protestant. I suggest that data from the interviews point to a third way between the two communities that has not been considered so far in the literature.

5.7.2. Case studies – findings about identity fluidity and change

Peter

Peter is a 'birthright', evangelical⁷⁷ Quaker in Northern Ireland and lives and works in a predominantly unionist area.⁷⁸ Peter explained that his parents would have considered themselves to be Protestant at start of the 'Troubles'. Peter said about the tradition of Quakerism he grew up in:

...the key thing was up to that point I'd say in my life if you talk about Ulster Quakerism, you're talking about a tradition that certainly until during my teenage years was quite conservative, and I think in many ways very traditional and it's quite interesting that, and we'll get on to this when we talk about the Troubles, but a lot of the social activity initially among Friends in Ulster was driven by Friends in the Belfast area, and the more evangelical tradition at this end of the country was more interested in the issues of spiritual concerns...I grew up on that tradition where being saved was a really important part of who you were.

⁷⁷ Bebbington's (1989) definition of evangelicalism consists of four elements: acceptance of conversion, belief in the Bible as the word of God, salvation is achieved through the death of Jesus Christ and faith is expressed through social action/ promoting the Christian message (Ganiel and Dixon 2008, 422). This definition fits Peter's religiosity in most aspects although his focus eventually changed from proselytising to social activism.

⁷⁸ In order to contextualise Peter's account I have given certain details which mean that he could be identified by other Irish Friends. However, he was one of the respondents who was willing to be identified and is already well-known within Irish Quakerism.

Marianne Elliott contends that it is very difficult for people in Northern Ireland to 'opt out' of sectarianism because of the way that it shapes people's identity (2009, 16). However, Peter gave many instances of how he challenged sectarianism from an early age, supported by his parents, who he said had different attitudes than other Protestant parents. For example, Peter decided to become a Celtic football supporter when he was seven although all his friends at school were supporters of Glasgow Rangers.⁷⁹ By the time he was eighteen Peter favoured the policies of the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP), 'which is a bit radical for somebody in a Protestant school' despite most of his friends supporting one of the Unionist parties. In a Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey conducted in 2003 it was found that only 2 percent of Protestants supported the SDLP (Mitchell 2006, 30-31), so Peter was very unusual in his choice of political party. Peter also had definite views about his nationality:

I have a British passport because it's cheaper than the Irish one quite frankly no other good reason...I remember by the time I'm 16, 17, 18 being asked what's your nationality and I would write British stroke Irish. It was never British alone by that stage. I was already saying to myself well actually I have two identities here and they're both important to me and I don't want to deny either of them. They matter to me. They're part of who I am and so I was making statements to myself and being aware...at that stage as well I was also saying to myself well actually what matters is whether people are fairly treated and what about the kids who grew up on the Falls or the Shankill? Not that I knew them but I was aware that their lives were a lot worse than mine.

Peter was conscious of the 'Troubles' during his childhood and the potential to be caught up in dangerous situations. He said that he was not personally affected by the conflict due to his protective family and the specific geographical locality where the

⁷⁹ In Northern Ireland and Scotland, football is one of the ways that sectarianism and social identity is expressed. Two prominent Scottish football teams, Celtic and Glasgow Rangers, are strongly associated with the two communities in Northern Ireland, Celtic with Nationalism/Republicanism and Glasgow Rangers with Unionism/Loyalism. Rivalry between the teams is intense, not only in sporting terms, but because they represent the two communities in conflict with each other during the 'Troubles' (Burdsey and Chappell 2003, 7). Peter, as a young Quaker in a Protestant school, chose to consciously support a team that represented the 'other' tradition marking him out as different from his peers.

violence mainly occurred. Peter talked about how he became increasingly aware during his secondary school years of injustice in Northern Ireland and realised that injustice bothered him. These examples of choices Peter made as a young man shows his awareness of sectarianism and how he was prepared to risk alienation from his peer group to make his own decisions. In talking about his motivation for the decisions he made Peter said that:

I'm someone who's driven by the idea that you choose things by principles and by values and by.. and also by experience. In other words if I've had a living relationship with the inward Christ how am I going to deny that?

After his return from university Peter joined the family business and said he was determined to increase the number of Catholics in his workforce. This was very difficult because the business was in a Protestant area of the town. In 1993 many commercial buildings, including Peter's, were blown up by a paramilitary bomb. The annual Loyalist parade from Drumcree Church was the source of much sectarian violence in the area at the time.⁸⁰ Peter talked about the violence in the streets of Portadown during the period leading up to the parade and going out with his father to separate people from the different communities who were fighting each other. It was also very common for Catholic employees to be ostracised by Protestant colleagues in the build-up to the 12th July. Peter was determined that this would not happen in his workplace. However, his efforts to create a non-sectarian atmosphere were undermined by his manager 'Neil', a unionist and member of the Orange Order. Peter said:

I remember the first 4 or 5 years ... because he [Neil] used to put bunting outside our factory kind of without asking me and he put this Protestant

⁸⁰ In 1995 a decision was made by senior police officers to change the parade route. This led to the 'Drumcree stand-off' when members of the Orange Order sought to follow their long established route which passed by a mainly nationalist housing estate on the Garvaghy road. Katy Radford suggests that this situation led to a highly charged atmosphere, and violence. There was also criticism of the authorities in the way they responded to the communities' competing demands (2004, 138).

bunting up and I said I don't want Protestant bunting up because all that says to the Catholic employees that I have you know you're not welcome. I'm supporting this thing and I'm not even supporting it. So it was a bit of a nightmare

And I remember going to Neil and Neil saying don't touch it because if you do you'll have the town, the local Protestant community after you. He had enough insight into how the Protestant community worked that he was wise enough to say, he was sympathetic. By this stage he was beginning to understand even though he did not agree with me, he understood where I stood and was trying to say 'Peter just cool your horses, look I'm just, I know you've got good reason to be annoyed about this because they had no right to get up on your building and attach bunting' because they had climbed up on my roof and done all this

So over the years we got the message through to the street that I actually, the only thing the least they could do was ask us, and in the end as time has gone by they've actually come each year and I'll say to them 'I'm not happy but I don't really have any choice, do I?' And they'll say 'no, we would really like to do it...' It's very interesting the last 2 or 3 years; the bunting hasn't gone up on the street. The place is moderating.

Elliott describes the displays on occasions such as the 12th July, as an example of cultural defensiveness common to Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, adding that people who have a secure identity are less likely to feel the need to defend it (2009, 8). In his opposition to the bunting Peter was challenging the cultural norms of the wider Protestant community. Peter took this even further by rejecting Protestantism as a personal category in certain situations. He told me that when completing the form monitoring the 'community background' of his workforce, introduced as part of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, he put himself down as 'other' rather than tick the Catholic or Protestant box.⁸¹

Peter was able to maintain his stance about the bunting over a period of years, despite the risk of alienation from the local Protestant community. How difficult this is was confirmed by another respondent:

⁸¹ This measure was introduced to tackle discrimination on the grounds of religious beliefs or political affiliation in employment, education and the provision of goods and services (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland).

...you'd have to have grown up in Northern Ireland particularly with a religious background to know how difficult it is to step outside the parameters of your belief systems that in doing so there is partly the guilt thing that trips in at some degree there is approval or disapproval kicks in as well.

The same person also acknowledged the pervasive influence of sectarianism even in people who are self-aware and committed to challenging negative stereotypes:

I'm going to make two contradictory statements. I don't believe I'm sectarian but I believe we're all sectarian. You cannot grow up in Northern Ireland without - because it's been imbued in you as part of your whole upbringing so you have to keep watching out for it all the time.

However, Peter seemed to feel a very strong sense of belonging to his Quaker evangelical Meeting and this connection may have acted as a protective factor against social isolation.⁸²

Sean

I now contrast the experiences of Peter with Sean, who is a Quaker from a Roman Catholic background in the Republic of Ireland. Sean said about his memories of Ireland as a young man:

So growing up in Ireland in the 50s it was quite a fundamentalist place in terms of Catholicism and we did not know it. You see that was the scary bit...So because we did not know Protestants, we held an identity which was separate and that separate identity, all that was left of it eventually was Catholicism because the Irish language went. So out of that powerlessness there came our separate identity in Catholicism and we took all the glory of that and looked down on the Prods you know...I thought Paisley was nuts but I can see our part in winding him up. Triumphalism, the triumphalism of Catholicism, our dead-sureness of stuff and of course I think the younger people, I don't know about today, but certainly I took it very seriously.

Sean's account supports Elliott's view that negative stereotyping has been a feature of relations between people in the island of Ireland, not just Northern Ireland (2009, 6). Furthermore, Elliott argues that the way Irishness came to be associated with Catholicism, with an identity formed from the experience of destitution and

⁸² Samuel Stroope argues that people with traditional religious beliefs tend to feel a strong sense of belonging to their faith group because there is a shared belief system (2011, 571-572).

colonialism, led to a narrow definition of who could belong to the Irish nation (2009, 8). This is compounded by the way that Catholic and Protestant young people in both parts of Ireland grow up learning different 'versions' of Irish history in school (Elliott 2009, 10).

Sean talked about his disenchantment with Catholicism and exploring the Charismatic Renewal movement⁸³ before eventually coming to Quakerism in the 1970s. Sean described himself as having come out of the Green (Irish nationalist) tradition and how he was affected by the outbreak of the 'Troubles' and in particular the events of 'Bloody Sunday' – the significance of which was explained in chapter three. Sean felt at home with the close-knit community at his Quaker Meeting and the pacifist position of Quakerism strongly appealed to him. However, this comfortable feeling was disturbed by an experience Sean had one Sunday when he attended a Meeting for Worship:

I remember the shock coming in here on a November morning and 'John' and 'Margaret' (two long-standing Quakers) were wearing poppies. The shock of it...they were red and it was a red rag to a bull coming out of the Green tradition. I mean I had known two men who had fought at Kilmichael⁸⁴ and one of them had a big garden and when poppies came up he'd run down and pull them up you know. That's how I grew up a child. Poppies represented comfort for the British army and going into Meeting and seeing 4 or 5 people with poppies was a shock. What the fuck was I doing here? And a part of me kind of I think just widening my perspective.

Sean had already developed a warm relationship with the two Quakers wearing the poppies and referred to them as being significant role models for him. Being part of a

⁸³ Charismatic Renewal (CR) is a Pentecostal movement which started in the US in the 1950s and by the 1970s became very popular among Catholics in Ireland. Research by Mitchell and Ganiel indicates that some evangelical Protestant Christians moved towards a 'theology of inclusion' after sharing spiritual experiences with Catholics in the CR movement (2011, 128). A number of respondents had taken part in CR services and stated that the movement was popular with a range of Christians seeking a more emotionally expressive form of spirituality.

⁸⁴ This refers to an attack by the West Cork IRA on an auxiliary police unit in 1920 which resulted in several police deaths and was regarded by republicans as a great victory over the British forces (Moloney 2007, 176).

Quaker community with an emphasis on connection, so that very different points of view can be held within the Meeting, enabled Sean see other perspectives:

I liked the conversations I had with 'John' and 'Margaret'. They were never that extensive but they were here and so I kind of could not dismiss them, so I had to learn to calm down and try and understand it.⁸⁵

This shows that Sean was able to recognise his own sectarian attitudes and stand back from them. In addition, Sean went beyond just understanding the diversity of Irish Quakerism to be able to take into account very different perspectives of other Quakers more vocal than John and Margaret. For example, Sean described his experience of attending a Yearly Meeting and hearing the views of a Northern Irish Quaker about a politician in the Republic of Ireland:

I remember up at a Yearly Meeting in Belfast at breakfast one morning and Peter Barry⁸⁶ was foreign minister at the time...I mean a more innocuous man you could not meet...I was sitting at breakfast one morning and there was someone at the other side of the table like calling Peter Barry an IRA supporter. So again I had to bring myself to try and understand both sides, my own and the others'.

Sean summarised his approach in the following way:

So I think that the nature of living in the world we have to say right and wrong about things - but if we're to understand the dynamics, if we're to bring healing to hurt you have to take that peculiar place in the middle which says let's just understand it, let's soothe ourselves in the awfulness, learn to tolerate the awfulness, so we can understand the dynamics of history and hurt. So it's about learning to tolerate the awfulness, to come out of reactivity – basically a spiritual kind of idea – letting go of idealism.

I asked Sean if he now sees himself as a Protestant and he laughed out loud saying:

...I know I have to have labels for certain situations but essentially I see myself as just a human being who I can certainly say Irish by culture, Catholic by culture. By practice I'm happier here with Quakers.

⁸⁵ Douglas Davies describes how people joining a new group tend to adapt themselves to fit in with prevailing norms, seeking out insiders to act as role models to help with this process (2008, 12). It is significant that Sean mentions that the conversations were not that extensive which implies that John and Margaret themselves were minimising or avoiding contentious issues that could have created tension in their Quaker community.

⁸⁶ Peter Barry was the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Dáil Éireann between 1982 and 1987. He helped to negotiate the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement which was extremely unpopular with many unionists (Coogan 1995, 197).

Sean demonstrated an ability to transcend aspects of his cultural identity and to acknowledge the different identities of other Quakers by 'taking the peculiar place in the middle' which is an aspect of identity not specifically explored in Todd's work. However, Sean's very clear statement about his identity being Irish and Catholic by culture, although he is content to call himself a Quaker, confirms Todd's conclusions about the potency of certain aspects of personal identity in Ireland. What is novel about my findings is the particular 'hybrid' identity of respondents, such as Sean, who manage to encompass a Quaker identity within their cultural-Catholicism. Tom Inglis refers to cultural barriers that make it problematic for people to leave Catholicism for another Christian denomination due to the negative associations of Protestantism with colonialism (2007, 212). Inglis proposes a typology of Catholics which includes a definition of cultural Catholicism which is different than the one suggested by my respondents. Inglis asserts that although the identification of cultural Catholics is more with the heritage of the Church than the institution, they still regard themselves as Catholic and would not consider finding another religious affiliation (2007, 215).

According to Inglis:

Being Catholic is like some indelible mark that they have accepted and have no desire to change. It is literally part of what they are, in the same way that they are, for example, white, male, and Irish (2007, 215-6).

However, as I have outlined in the thesis, this barrier has largely been overcome by Quakers from a Catholic background who have found it possible to retain their cultural identity and belong to another Christian group.⁸⁷

Mitchell's contention that some aspects of identity may be accentuated by circumstances or the behaviour of other people is seen in the example of Sean who

⁸⁷ I have no data about the number of people in Ireland who are culturally-Catholic and transfer to another religious affiliation. My sense is that it is not very common. For example, in my large, extended Irish Catholic family I appear to be the only one who has done this.

became very conscious of his Irish nationalist roots when he saw the red poppies worn by fellow Quakers to commemorate Remembrance Day. This also works in the way that we are perceived by other people, for example, Peter having his factory covered in unionist bunting because in that situation he was regarded as being part of the Protestant community. As Mitchell suggests the concept of community is also based on social categorisations – it is not something that is fixed, and exists in the perceptions of people who feel part of a specific community and also those who observe and describe that community (2006, 12-13).

Peter and Sean appear to represent two very different strands of Irish Quakerism. Peter is from an evangelical, Protestant background in a unionist area of Northern Ireland. Sean grew up in an Irish post-colonial society that was shaped by the central role of the Roman Catholic Church. However, I suggest that Peter and Sean have more in common than may be initially apparent. For example, both men sought to challenge sectarianism in their part of Ireland. They actively transcended aspects of their social identity, for example, in Peter's case his choice of political affiliation and hybrid national identity, and the way he responded to sectarian attitudes and behaviour in his own community and workplace. Peter also modified his evangelicalism considerably in order to act as a bridge between evangelical and liberal Friends. Sean's approach reflected the reality of living in a part of Ireland not directly affected by the 'Troubles'. He demonstrated a willingness to encompass the perspective of Quakers from a traditional 'Protestant' background and examine attitudes formed by his cultural heritage. However, he retained a strong attachment to his Catholic background as one aspect of a multi-faceted identity.

To conclude, it can be argued that these two case studies illustrate my finding that these respondents have a form of 'hybrid' identity that is much more flexible and reflexive than was found in Todd's study.

5.8. Chapter summary

This chapter outlined a 'road map' of identity theory beginning with an overview of primordialist and social constructivist perspectives to set out the context for ideas about the development of identity-related conflict, and specifically Todd's research about the nature of identity in the two Irish states. I then introduced the results of my study of Quakers in Ireland through an identity matrix and case studies, and compared my findings with the main findings from Todd's study. I argued that some of the respondents in my study have developed a Quaker identity that is arguably neither Catholic nor Protestant because of the sectarian connotations of these religious/political categories. It appears that the identity category of 'Quaker' can subsume other personal identity labels that in certain situations can prove to be divisive. This subject is developed in more depth in chapter six which also explores the impact and management of hybrid identities within IYM.

CHAPTER SIX

CULTURE AND IDENTITY OF IRELAND YEARLY MEETING

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter of this thesis explored the meaning of identity in terms of the lived experiences of individual respondents. The main themes were highlighted in an identity matrix and in case studies which gave examples of how respondents communicated and negotiated their identities in a variety of settings, and also illustrated the hybrid and fluid nature of these identities. In this chapter I discuss the corporate identity of IYM which mirrors the diverse personal identity of Friends and encompasses a broad spectrum of theological, national and political backgrounds and divergent social attitudes. Corporate identity and the impact of diversity within the Yearly Meeting are explored in a number of ways in this chapter, beginning with an overview of the culture of IYM (6.2).

Section 6.3 analyses the ways in which sectarianism in the two Irish states has impacted on the Religious Society of Friends. I argue that the diverse range of what Mitchell (2006) refers to as 'hybrid' or multi-layered identities has resulted in tensions which impact on relationships between Friends and on the Society as a whole. I give examples of particularly sensitive issues that have caused conflict within the Yearly Meeting, including the difficulties in formulating a corporate response to the 'Troubles' to the most recent example of the revision of the Irish Quaker anthology now called *Quaker Life and Practice* (2012).

I suggest that Irish Quakers have developed a model of complex identity management which prioritised and maintained the unity of the Society in order to

preserve relationships between Friends (relational unity). This model has three main components which are discussed: firstly, the structure of the Society; secondly, Friends in key roles; and thirdly, the approach of IYM to management of conflict and disunity (6.4). The meaning of unity in the Irish Quaker context is also explored (6.5).

6.2. The Culture of Irish Quakerism

This section begins with a brief reference to the literature about organisational culture in order to contextualise my findings about the culture of Quakerism in Ireland. A more detailed exploration of these perspectives is beyond the scope of this study. The interplay between individuals and the organisational culture of Quakerism is a key theme of this chapter. I argue that the culture of Irish Quakerism has both adapted to individual members, for example, through the influence of culturally-Catholic Friends joining the Society (which was explored in chapter five) and in turn the culture of Quakerism has impacted on individuals' sense of identity.

Mats Alvesson asserts that 'a sense of common, taken for granted ideas, beliefs and meanings are necessary for continuing organized activity' – adding that this facilitates connections between people in the organisation and reduces confusion and constant reinterpretation of the meanings of key organisational goals (2002, 2). In defining what culture is, Alvesson suggests that it is 'understood to be a system of common symbols and meanings' (2002, 3) and goes on to add that culture is not something that exists mainly within individuals but takes place in the interactions between people 'where symbols and meanings are publically expressed' (2002, 4). However, Martin Parker argues that although in general this definition of organisational culture is accurate his research suggests that organisations can also have 'multiple divides',

related to specific ‘affiliations or schisms’ within the organisations (2000, 187). Parker suggests that ‘these divisions function as a way of classifying the identity of self and other, in effect, of grounding a particular assertion about the distinctiveness of an individual or group’ (2000, 188).

According to a respondent who shared their impressions of Quaker identity in Ireland, the ‘Troubles’ brought some changes in the culture of Irish Quakerism. I was told that although not many people joined the Religious Society of Friends during this period; the new ones tended to be drawn to the peace testimony and also that those people were quite active. Apparently this was very different from the culture of the old established Quaker families, who were predominantly ‘birthright’ Friends. This respondent asserted that newer Friends were disaffected by their previous Churches (for example, those from Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland backgrounds) for theological and structural reasons, and were looking for the new more open structure that they found in Quakerism. Thus identity became different – rather than one clear Quaker identity there were three or four different identities that were equally strong and consequently there was a greater need for tolerance of each other. There was a sense that Friends from different traditions co-existed rather than really accepting each other (personal correspondence, 2012). Ross Chapman identifies this change as being linked to adherents from a culturally-Catholic background who joined the Society in the 1970s (2013, 16); this point is developed further in section 6.2.2. Additionally, a number of respondents have commented on the distinctive regional subcultures in IYM.

Chapter one provided an introduction to Quaker culture and highlighted a number of key aspects relevant for this study. For example, adherents assert that all can have a direct relationship with God – and are guided by the principle of ‘the priesthood of all believers’. This means that sharing responsibility for the function and structure of the organisation is a fundamental aspect of the Quaker theology and all roles within the organisation rotate and are decided by a process of discernment. In addition, discernment is the basis for decision making through the Quaker business method where, as Dandelion argued, ‘they claim to ‘discern’ the will of God’. Because of the diverse culture of Quakerism in Ireland it can be argued this has posed particular challenges in terms of Alvesson’s reference to ‘common, taken for granted ideas, beliefs and meanings’. Examples of these challenges are explored in this chapter. The next section discusses some of the different forms of identity that make up the culture of IYM.

6.2.1. Political identity and affiliation

Some respondents felt that Friends in Northern Ireland tend to avoid involvement in party politics for a number of reasons, as illustrated by the following quote:

On the whole Friends tend not to be party political – they will campaign in peace movements, in movements for social justice – at the same time there is always a worry ‘oh should we be in with this group because they might be members of Sinn Féin’. There is a fear of contamination by groups who have a tradition of violence and being identified, among some Friends – not all. Not all have that fear.

The issue of ‘contamination’ will be explored more fully in section 6.3.1 when I look at how the Yearly Meeting responded as a corporate body to the ‘Troubles’. However, my findings showed that there were different perspectives about the involvement of Friends in certain aspects of political activism as the following quote illustrates:

It's true to say that we have within this Quarterly Meeting everything from Sinn Féin through to the Democratic Unionist Party [DUP] and that reality is a very interesting one. You've got this mad diversity of political as well as theological [affiliations] and it's usually, that you can be pretty sure, that the evangelicals will be DUP – although that's not by any means...but there's one or two would be on the liberal wing of Quakerism so you have a spectrum in both within Ulster Meeting. And you have members who are members of the Orange Order...And we have had Minutes – Minutes from Quarterly Meeting saying Friends should be discouraged from joining the Orange Order...In the end I think they began to see...that actually it wasn't a very Christian thing to be doing at all. They perceived it to be part of their Christian life, because that's the way the Orange Order is presented to a lot of people.

As well as describing the diverse political affiliations of Quakers in Northern Ireland this quote also highlights the connection between political and theological outlook that was explored in chapter three and, in particular, observations in the Quaker identity matrix in chapter five, about the evangelical Friends who were embedded in their unionist communities.

A number of respondents in the Republic of Ireland felt very strongly that religious groups should remain apart from party politics because of negative associations with the influential role of the Roman Catholic Church, as this quote illustrates:

It's left to individual Friends who are working in various organisations to try to come up with a Friendly line on various things. I don't think there'd be enough agreement across the political spectrum within Friends to be able to come up with a cohesive statement. I think it's inevitable, and I would be unhappy if it was to happen, because it would be kind of like the model of the Roman Church attempting to control the state in Ireland...and I think the idea of a religious community becoming a force in politics is a recipe for disaster.

However, some Friends did volunteer their political affiliations and a number of were active within some of the smaller political parties in the Republic of Ireland, for example, the Green Party and the Progressive Democrats were specifically mentioned. In Northern Ireland some Friends supported non-sectarian groups such as the Alliance party or a mainstream nationalist party like the SDLP; this can be

seen as being linked to the 'Quaker not Protestant' position of Friends explored in chapter five. 'Britishness' and the national identity of Friends were also discussed in the previous chapter.

6.2.2. Cultural-Catholicism

Chapter five highlighted the significance of Friends joining the Society from Catholic and other Christian backgrounds and the impact on the culture of Irish Quakerism, in the sense that it contributed towards IYM having a number of equally strong identities. In this section I specifically discuss cultural-Catholicism. One explanation of why there might have been some difficulty welcoming people from a Catholic background to Quakerism was given by Quaker House representatives, Janet and Alan Quilley, who observed that:

Janet Quilley: one of the first things that really did I could not get my head round at Yearly Meeting...was about burials in Quaker graveyards and this was such an issue as to whether people who were not Quakers could be buried there, and it wasn't till a little way down the line that I understood why this was so important, because in the south it was very very likely that people had come from a Catholic background and may well be married to a Catholic and when they got buried they'd like their spouse to be there too...Alan Quilley added: which might mean a priest coming along.

Janet Quilley: and it really took me some time to get my head round why it was so important, and why yes they could do that and why people in the north could not accept that.

Other observations were to do with the reasons why people give up their previous religious affiliation and how this might impact on the Society. One respondent said:

We've had this great influx of people from Catholicism and from other backgrounds so the nature of the Society has changed because these people bring their life experience – a certain amount of baggage with them.

Other respondents were concerned about how Friends by 'convincement' learnt about Quaker culture and adapted to it. They observed that some Friends' rejection

of the hierarchy of Roman Catholicism had attracted them to the more egalitarian structures and practices of Quakerism but eventually they became impatient with how these processes worked. Another respondent stated that:

When I was growing up we absorbed a great deal through the pores so to speak, as 'birthright' Friends, because we were growing up in a Quaker household, and we would have grace before meals and we understood that, this was our understanding of when Jesus said 'do this in memory of me'. Other people grew up and had the Eucharist and the bread and the wine. We have a period of quiet reflection and give thanks before meals. People coming in from outside haven't sat through Monthly Meeting and Yearly Meeting for years...so therefore haven't absorbed a lot of the things. We learnt a lot through 'sitting by Nelly', so to speak, which we need to teach other people, so they have an understanding, because other than that it only takes one clerk who doesn't understand and doesn't do things the way they ought to be done and the memory's gone. We're at a point now where we are starting to have clerks' training courses. It's very necessary because there is the knowledge and the approach to business that we need to be able to share.

At the Yearly Meeting I attended in 2011, a special interest group called 'RC to Q' (Roman Catholicism to Quakerism) focused on what former Catholics bring to Quakerism, the perceptions of other Quakers and how this could 'help or hinder the development' of Irish Quakerism (Minihan 2011, 4). A further workshop was added to the programme because of the popularity of this event. At the second session a participant mentioned that in Northern Ireland very few Catholics moved to Quakerism and some that did had not received a warm welcome. This observation highlights one of Jennifer Todd's findings, in chapter five, about the awareness of religious distinctions in Northern Ireland. At the end of the workshop a strong commitment was expressed by Friends present to take this discussion forward, both in terms of helping to integrate newer Quakers from a Catholic background and the Society adjusting to this development (field notes, IYM, Dublin 2011).

Peter Macallister, a Friend from Northern Ireland, describes himself as growing up in a nationalist area of West Belfast during the 'Troubles', leaving the Catholic Church and moving to England 'having had enough of the violent sectarian bigotry' in Northern Ireland and becoming a 'convinced' Friend (2011, 12). Macallister said that:

When the IRA cease fire came into effect I returned to Northern Ireland full of optimism and buoyed up by the deep influence of English Quakerism and early Friends had on me. I felt this form of Quakerism so uplifting and alive compared to the toxic sectarian nature of much of Northern Ireland Protestantism and Catholicism. For me Quakerism stood apart and above these forms of Christianity... (2011, 12).

Macallister goes on to describe how some Friends in Northern Ireland responded when he shared his experiences of English Quakerism by saying 'that English and Irish Quakerism were not the same'. As Macallister acknowledged: 'This is of course true as Friends in Ireland, and Northern Ireland particularly, have been affected by the political, social, historical, sectarian and religious influences of the partitioned island' (2011, 12). Macallister added that he did not recognise much of what he saw in Northern Ireland as Quakerism as he understood it, and commented on the evangelical and unionist outlook of Friends in the rural areas of Northern Ireland compared to the more diverse form in the urban areas. However, following his attendance at the 'RC to Q' workshop Macallister hopes that 'Meetings in Northern Ireland might one day feel more able to explore the positive aspects of Catholicism and the values that are shared with Quakerism' (2011, 12).

The Yearly Meeting in 2012 had a follow up to the 'RC to Q' workshop with a special interest group called 'Liberal Irish Quakers – weighty Friends or supermarket Christians?' (Culturally-Catholic Friends are predominantly liberal). This session was advertised as an exploration and discussion of 'liberal Quaker stereotypes'. This was

also a well-attended workshop and I observed some very thoughtful, deep and respectful discussion between participants (field notes, IYM, Dublin 2012). The interest groups referred to above are indicative of the overlap between the cultural and theological identity of Friends within Irish Quakerism which is explored in the next section.

6.2.3. Theological Identity

As previously mentioned in chapter one, the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland includes both evangelical and liberal Quakers. The majority of evangelical Quakers are in Northern Ireland and many are also part of an evangelical Protestant and unionist subculture. There are also a number of liberal Friends – many based in the urban areas of Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland is predominantly liberal with a minority of evangelical Friends. The basis of this theological spectrum which is unique in worldwide Quakerism was explored in chapter four, and it also relates to the different political and social cultures of the two Irish states discussed in chapter three. This quote from a respondent encapsulates the theological spectrum of Irish Quakerism:

Dublin is probably quite a good reflection of overall Irish Quakerism in that we have great extremes of theological outlook. We have people who are virtually agnostic down to people who are very dependent on the Bible, very clear that Christ was both fully divine and fully human and that his death on the cross was very significant and that he rose from the dead. The number of, if you want to use the label evangelical Friends in Dublin, is now very small and I think sometimes I personally feel a siege mentality but on the other hand I appreciate so much the friendship...with [people] whom I would differ hugely – makes me value the fact that we can live together within the Society.

In my research I found that this diversity of theological outlook was the source of some tension within the Society. This is reflected in the outlook of a number of liberal Friends who talked about feeling more comfortable with the non-theistic language

used by some Quakers in BYM. For example, this respondent explained what Quakerism meant to them:

I'm getting back to what the essence of Quakerism is. It's based on testimonies. We don't have creeds we have testimonies. We live something out and we live out what our creed is.

This observation was borne out by my findings – liberal Friends did largely refer to their Quaker spirituality being expressed in social justice campaigns and other forms of activism. In contrast, evangelical Friends mainly talked about having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; one respondent said:

My relationship with Jesus Christ is undoubtedly real to me. I know that I believe absolutely...that Christ is there and dwells within me and has an impact on my life.

As Mitchell and Ganiel indicate, simplistic stereotypes of evangelical Christians in Northern Ireland do not match the diversity of belief, political affiliation and perspectives on social issues found in their research and other studies. They also point to the differences between evangelicals in terms of gender, social class and location in rural or urban areas (2011, 19). The same can be said for their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland. However, it is clear from my research that there is an aspect of the evangelical Quakerism that conforms with traditional evangelical Christianity, both theologically and in terms of attitudes to certain social issues. This is illustrated by the following extract from the website of Grange Quaker Meeting, in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland:

Statement of Belief

Grange Preparative Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends adheres to the great foundation truths of Holy Scripture. We regard the whole Bible as the inspired Word of God and of final authority, and that there is no salvation, except through the atoning work of Christ, who is God manifested in the flesh and revealed to us by the Holy Spirit...(Grange Friends Meeting).

The perspective of Grange Friends about homosexuality and civil partnerships is discussed in section 6.3.2. I found that for some evangelical Friends Quakerism was more like the outer form of their Christianity than the inner core, as this respondent explained:

I regard Quakerism as a box, a wrapping for my Christian faith, and the reason the reasons I have remained a Friend are various one...I think Quakerism at its best is the closest I've ever encountered to what I see as the experience of the early Church.

The following quote is an evangelical perspective which challenges the emphasis on what they regard as the 'faith in action' or the social activism of some, mainly liberal, Friends:

It's not that it [Quakerism] can supply the answers. I mean the answer is not a series of ideas. It's a relationship with Jesus Christ or with God through Jesus Christ...so Quakerism could if it could get its act together and actually tell people what we're about and not about, peace and ecology and stuff, which are only to my mind applied religion.

However, some respondents were uncomfortable with religious labels and reflected that there was a tendency towards liberal 'fundamentalism'. One said that: 'I don't like the labels evangelical or liberal because I feel that we who call ourselves liberal have an evangelical cast'.

Elizabeth Duke's findings confirmed my observations about the theological diversity of Friends and also outlined some of the resulting tensions, as the following extract illustrates:

The ***diversity of belief*** among Irish Friends could be seen either positively or negatively. Some Friends with a Christian commitment were seriously worried by the perceived dominance of non-Christians: 'If you have some Christian faith, you're becoming increasingly disenfranchised among Friends. We're missing the historical and spiritual core of Jesus.' Others felt that 'telling people they need salvation doesn't work; I need to reach out in love and tenderness...We can't know the experiences of others'; 'I have felt the Holy Spirit in a kibbutz and in Muslim friends; you can't shut God in a box'. Similar

differences were expressed by Friends who did not use Christian language. Negatively, 'I find some unease among Friends in Ireland about moving out of the box; I prefer the British *Quaker Faith and Practice* to the Ireland book...I wouldn't have been attracted to some Meetings in Ireland'; 'a fundamentalist approach to the Bible that seems to me not to be part of a rich Quaker diversity, but could rather be the undoing of the Quaker dream'. In contrast, 'If their words lead them to their salvation, I am happy for them, so long as they don't want me to do it. We are on the same path at different angles.' 'I can appreciate how people for whom [salvation] has meaning have a Hallelujah feeling' (Duke 2012b, 10).

This section outlined the diverse nature of the culture and identity of IYM. The following sections set out some of the challenges this diversity presents in maintaining the unity of the Society.

6.3. Challenges to unity

6.3.1. The 'Troubles'

The diverse political and cultural backgrounds of Friends, particularly in Ulster QM, outlined earlier meant that the Yearly Meeting's response was mainly limited to agreement about the necessity to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland. However, for some Friends this approach has been viewed as an avoidance of addressing the roots of the conflict as seen in these comments:

There's been a good number of Quaker projects in the north but we've been very reluctant to engage with things in a political way and very reluctant to call a wrong a wrong. I can't see any records of Quakers supporting the civil rights movement. I can't see any record of them saying that what brought about the civil rights movement was wrong.

This respondent suggested that this had to do with the traditionally unionist culture of Irish Quakerism, particularly in Northern Ireland:

If you're living in a rural area and you're trying to be live with your neighbours who are predominantly Protestant and unionist you're not going rock the boat with them and I think that was one of the issues. I think it's still one of the issues. The geographical and cultural background of Ulster Quakers is one that as a Yearly Meeting we're still trying to grapple with. It still spills out in a whole range of things. It spills out in the divisions in our Yearly Meeting all the

time. The part of it, I've always felt, is got to do with much more about not wanting to let themselves down in front of their neighbours who are of that strong Protestant, Ulster Protestant tradition.

A common theme in the interviews was the concern expressed or observed by some respondents that talking openly with each other about issues that highlighted major theological and political divisions in the Society would result in a schism, as this quote illustrates:

There's the very evangelical element in Quakers which would be very strident in their approach and there's the very liberal element in Quakers which would be almost too loose for some people. That's actually where you would see it and for long time ne'er the twain should meet, although it's getting better over time. What I have noticed is that if people don't agree they don't partake, so one of my biggest fears has been the possibility of a schism and I remember way back - we had the Yearly Meeting in Waterford one year, and I could see it rolling out in front of me, and it was actually over the peace process... because it was very anti-IRA, very anti-republican, very anti-nationalist... everyone was afraid to talk to one another. They were terrified of mentioning it...I said to them you won't cause a schism if you talk, you'll cause a schism if you don't talk, because actually what happens is people leave...So I would say to people you need to be able to agree to disagree.

One respondent's perspective was that in Northern Ireland some Quaker Meetings were inward looking, wanting to have a good relationship with everyone. They had no issue with civil rights, their attitude was: 'we are living in a democracy so what's the problem?' This person observed that there was an issue with English Friends coming to Northern Ireland from a different social class compared to Ulster Quakers who were mainly from a rural background. English Quakers were seen as more intellectual, university educated, saying what needed to be done to address the conflict and creating organisations. Ulster Friends had no problem with services being provided – the problem was with the use of violence and republican aims for a United Ireland and the constitutional question (this point was reiterated by a number of respondents). Unionists (including Quakers) would have hardened their position

(personal correspondence, 2012).

A number of respondents referred to the very difficult discussion and 'lack of unity' about an application for membership from an attender who was a member of Sinn Féin. Application for formal membership of the Religious Society of Friends is considered using the Quaker business method outlined in chapter one. According to Dandelion, 'Unity is considered as a sign of discerning God's will accurately, disunity as a sign that further work needs to be done...'. (2008b, 129). In effect, the outcome was that the application for membership in this case was neither denied nor granted because 'lack of unity' meant that a decision could not be made. Another application for membership can be made in the future if there is a change in circumstances, however, this applicant decided not to.

Apparently the applicant referred to above had a long history of involvement in peace making activities which included promoting a political settlement to the 'Troubles' within the republican movement. I was told that although some Friends supported this application there were others who felt very strongly that being a member of Sinn Féin was incompatible with the peace testimony. The other main objection came from Friends with a unionist background and may have indicated a sectarian basis linked to prejudicial views of Sinn Féin as an organisation. It was stressed that Friends, like all Churches in Northern Ireland were and are a complicated mix of political views and backgrounds. The 'lack of unity' about this application – which highlighted the different perspectives of Friends on this issue – was apparently so painful that even though it occurred many years ago it is still difficult for those concerned to discuss the situation openly.

One respondent talked about there being:

A series of undercurrents in the north between the more liberal, whatever you mean by that, Friends maybe around South Belfast and the Friends more out west who, they didn't really want to have a block put between them and the other Protestants in their community. So they would have been a bit touchy about some of the contacts and you'd be frightened because you wouldn't want to put a step wrong and suddenly either let the side down or leave yourselves open to attack. A number of Friends had relatives who'd died in the Troubles. A number of Friends had their premises regularly bombed out and burned.

Some Friends managed the boundary between having a 'concern'⁸⁸ about the 'Troubles' and being part of a diverse religious community by acting on a more individual basis. One example is the work of Victor Bewley, a Dublin Quaker, who was asked by republican paramilitaries to act as a conduit to British government officials. As Rachel Bewley-Bateman commented this had to be managed very carefully:

Quaker procedure can be very long drawn out. If you want to do everything by committee it can take a little bit of time and some things are, it's better for the person with the concern to work with it...if I develop a concern I theoretically take it to my PM and with a bit of luck it might go on to MM and QM and YM but how long does that take? And sometimes it's appropriate and sometimes the work is better done quietly by the person who has the concern...but obviously people can't do everything and in terms of off the record conversations, you can't have off the record conversations if too many people know about them anyway.

Another respondent gave examples of where they believed the Religious Society of Friends declined to position itself, identifying the partition of Ireland as the key point when the foundation of the new Northern Irish state created structural inequality for the nationalist minority:

I have not come across statements from Quakers supporting or saying that the state that evolved in Northern Ireland after the division was wrong and that the attempt by the unionists to hold on to their majority by gerrymandering was wrong. There are no statements either during the period or subsequent to the

⁸⁸ Dandelion refers to a concern as 'A 'leading' from God to action' (2008b, 130).

period. There is no sense that a wrong was done. Equally there is no very clear statement by Quakers saying that the campaign by the Provos⁸⁹ was wrong as well. We just don't do it, we don't stand up and say this is wrong... we're not very good at saying that this is wrong. We try to get sides to talk. We try to alleviate distress. We try to alleviate the suffering. We're still not very good at saying 'this is wrong'.

Another respondent also asserted that the Religious Society of Friends failed to speak out about specific human rights violations during the Troubles:

But taking on the hard human rights issues like Bloody Sunday, like the Birmingham Six, like the Guildford Four, like strip searching – anything like that. I feel that in some way open discussion on those issues has been or was silenced – we've been silent as a body and that's probably because it would be seen as taking sides – possibly would have been seen as taking up issues that were being struggled for by mainly people from the Catholic community or more specifically the republican community, that would be my understanding. I think there are two strands...I think some of it is the concern about not taking sides and that it was important for Quakers to be able to be a 'bridge' in Northern Ireland and some of the reluctance could possibly be said to be sectarian. These would probably be the two main reasons why those issues have never been brought up – have never been corporately looked at.

The following quote is an example of how a respondent's opinion of how 'political' Irish Quakerism is in the sense of avoidance of sensitive subjects and the impact this has on communication between Friends:

I think Irish Quakerism is very muted, silenced almost, almost in talking to each other we don't talk deeply to each other. We talk politically. I mean political in the [sense] we negotiate...If I feel that you're an evangelical I will avoid any deep talk about religion...and so, and then we all get on awfully well, much too well really.

I asked if the differences are silencing people and the respondent replied that:

Yes, and I mean silence in all kinds of senses. Silence in the sense that we don't even deal with conflict. **We have silenced conflict itself.** Yet we talk about peace and we stand for peace and I don't think there can be any peace unless we are prepared to get into the fire...we have to get into the conflict and try and understand it but that's what we don't, we don't even do. Issues like Irish politics we hardly get into them at all. I think we would be, are slow about entering that area.

89 Members of the Provisional IRA.

Another respondent was more pragmatic about the necessity for the Society to 'manage' contentious issues, stating that:

I suppose it would be the early years of the Troubles, it's probably documented somewhere a Meeting...the question came up at Yearly Meeting and because of the theological and political diversity of Friends within the Yearly Meeting that wasn't, it hadn't been flagged beforehand and it wasn't the appropriate moment to get into detailed discussion, so it was suggested that there should be a meeting called for interested Friends and this took place in Churchtown [PM], and it was very interesting there that we got quite a broad spread of theological and political diversity there, having a session talking about the Troubles where we were coming from, the different angles.

Perhaps this sensitivity about openly discussing certain subjects also reflects norms in the wider society:

Now you would always find out in Ireland, in the Republic, you would find out where people stood, what newspaper they read, what side their family was on, and then if it was the side, the awkward side, you just did not talk.

This sense of being silenced and silencing oneself was also experienced in other aspects of society:

I suppose, I have probably silenced myself in a number of different situations. I would have gone to republican women's events and felt slightly uncomfortable there because I was an English Quaker. I would have gone to general women's events and probably felt things aren't being said here that I would like to be strong enough to bring up, and I would have been at Quaker gatherings and would have felt that certain issues relating to the conflict in the north of Ireland, were not appropriate to be raised either.

Rachel Muers' work focuses on concerns expressed about a perceived lack of a common sense of English identity. Muers contends that an essential aspect of a shared identity is the silencing of certain groups of people or individuals because in order to preserve a distinctive identity, groups tend to exclude or silence those who do not 'fit' what is regarded as the template identity (2004, 111-112). It could be argued that 'silencing' then is not just about preserving unity but embedded in the Irish culture for the reasons given above. Muers suggests that:

The theoretical aspects of this silencing includes the construction of the universal subject as (for example) male or European, and the exclusion of the concern of any other group from public consideration (2004, 112).

Who the 'universal subject' is in the Irish Quaker context is complex and difficult to define. One respondent argued that IYM stays together because the alternative would be untenable:

...the north-south divide is very deep in psychology even though there is a lot of reconciliation. The way we think, both actually, paradoxically unionists and nationalists in the north, I think are mentally in a very different place than in the south of Ireland. I think that that is probably quite a deep issue in Ireland Yearly Meeting because we are very happy to be together because if it wasn't it wouldn't be possible – we're so small. I think the strength of Ireland Yearly Meeting is we'll never split because it would be so frankly ridiculous, we're so small in numbers – we could not split in that way.

An example of organisational conflict which resulted in a schism is explored in chapter seven. This occurred in Indiana Yearly Meeting in 2013, mainly due to tensions between liberal and conservative Friends over attitudes towards homosexuality. The next section explores this issue in the context of IYM.

6.3.2. Homosexuality and same-sex relationships

I argue that in recent years tensions within IYM have shifted from those related to Friends' political identity to theological and social aspects of identity. These identity categories are not separate entities but linked in complex ways. One of the issues consistently raised in the interviews was how the Society is responding to homosexuality and same-sex relationships. It appears that this has become a touchstone for some Friends about what it means to be an 'authentic' Quaker in the Irish context and reflects to a certain extent how some liberal and evangelical Friends differently interpret Quaker theology. One respondent expressed her shock at hearing a Northern Irish Friend referring to the Book of Leviticus in the Old

Testament when the subject of homosexuality was being discussed and related this to her experience of having the scriptures mediated within Roman Catholicism:

...is the first time that I got the 'shocker' of hearing Quakers talking like this. It was in connection with the new book [*Quaker Life and Practice*] that was coming out but it was away back in something like 2005 or 6 and I heard people from the north of Ireland condemning homosexuality on the basis of Leviticus, the passage in Leviticus. Now I mean to a Roman Catholic we have never used the Bible first-hand we've had it coming through the Church...I mean here's decades later, I thought I belonged to a terribly conservative Catholicism, decades later I'm here in... at this Meeting, and I hear this and I had left Catholicism because it was medieval and here I am back into the same thing again. I can understand condemning homosexuality if you feel unhappy about that kind of sexuality. I can understand that but I can't understand condemning it on the basis of scripture in the modern era that we're in – unless you're going to say I do not accept human investigation of an ancient document of scripture. If you say that then I also understand you but I say that's a very dangerous position to take. These are the things that we never totally ironed out.

These varying interpretations of Quaker theology were played out during the revision of *Quaker Life and Practice*. One respondent suggested that an awareness of the theological diversity of Friends was triggered by the revision process and this motivated Friends to attend the Yearly Meeting in greater numbers than usual:

But that actually was an eye opener for a lot Friends because it was only when we started sending out the material to...and we sent it to each of the PMs and the large Meetings around Yearly Meeting and feedback came back that some Friends suddenly discovered the theological diversity that there was within Yearly Meeting which they had not been aware of because people had been living in their own circle...Irish Friends had never as a Yearly Meeting discussed same-sex relationships so that was something that became a major issue towards the end. But I remember it was at one, one of the special Yearly Meetings and Ulster Friends had actually hired a bus and 35 people came down on a bus for the special Yearly Meeting, so this was wonderful that they were concerned and it included quite a few people from a particular Meeting which had normally only sent one or two Friends, so I knew that they were all there. I could see them and Friends from different parts of the country and Friends from the south as well, from around the Yearly Meeting.

Ross Chapman, a member of the Revision Committee,⁹⁰ described the sometimes tortuous process Friends went through attempting to find unity about the wording of contentious issues. In 2004 there were a series of events to commemorate 350 years of Quakerism in Ireland. During this year Friends were asked to consider an early draft of the new book. Chapman commented that 'And yet, unknown to the public, there was an immediate crisis at the heart of the Society' (2013, 19). Chapman went on to say that there were many objections to the proposed draft and that some Friends were not in favour of a new book. According to Chapman:

They saw themselves as disciples of Jesus rather than disciples of the present age. Although aware of the changes within IYM, the evidence of this in cold print came as a shock. They felt betrayed (2013, 20).

Conversely, some Friends felt that 'the draft had not gone far enough in representing a non-traditional religious perspective. They found the draft too prescriptive and needing more uncertainty as befits a questing religion' (2013, 20).

This section from *Quaker Life and Practice* about sexual orientation reflects how the different traditions of Irish Quakerism were eventually represented:

Friends recognise that God has made us sexual beings. We unite in a desire to understand and value the spiritual insights of all our members and attenders regardless of their sexual orientation. We also however recognise that for some the physical expression of homosexuality is an occasion of spiritual struggle, confusion and profound distress. Some see it as a sin. We accept that more courage, prayer, knowledge and consideration are needed as we seek to understand the mind of God and to love one another (The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Ireland 2012, 7.30).

Some respondents expressed great dissatisfaction with the final version of this section of *Quaker Life and Practice*. However, others mentioned that it helps that Irish Friends have various texts to choose from that match their theological

90 A special committee of the Yearly Meeting called the Revision Committee was set up in 1999 to manage the process. Members were selected to reflect the theological and regional diversity of IYM (Chapman 2013, 17).

perspectives, for example, liberal Quakers can draw on the British Quaker anthology *Quaker Faith and Practice* and are therefore not constrained by the Irish Quaker version.

6.3.3. Some consequences of disunity

A number of respondents expressed concern that some evangelical Friends are leaving Quakerism and going to more traditional Christian Churches, or that in some cases PMs are becoming detached from the Yearly Meeting and making public statements affirming traditional, evangelical Quaker beliefs. For example, Grange PM stated the Meeting's position about homosexual relationships and possible future legislation on their website, as follows:

The traditionally accepted understanding of Christian marriage is that it is an ordinance of God, and that it has meant the union between a man and a woman, for the procreation of the human race, and the right upbringing of children. The family unit was instituted by God, preserved in the Law of Moses and in the teaching of Jesus Christ and the Apostles, and as such it has been the bed-rock of family life and a stable society.

Ireland Yearly Meeting, the governing body of Quakers in Ireland has stated that each Meeting is responsible for its own stance on homosexual relationships. Our view in Grange Meeting is that homosexual civil partnerships are contrary to Bible teaching. We strongly feel that, should homosexual marriage become legalized, this would be a violation of God's law and should not take place in our Meeting House (Grange Friends Meeting).

This stance has led to concerns by some respondents that PMs unhappy about the direction of the Society were beginning to withdraw and become 'congregational', that is more autonomous. This was linked to worries about the potential loss of evangelical Young Friends to other more traditional Churches because of the spectrum of views within Irish Quakerism. The appointment of a Youth Co-ordinator in 2010 working with Young Friends across the Society was seen as an important initiative by many respondents.

One respondent observed that:

On the whole we are afraid to confront certain issues. We have done more of that recently but the getting together of *Christian Life and Practice* was a very painful journey and there were Friends saying we shouldn't be dredging these things up at the same time I saw Friends move, move closer together while that was going on, others it drove them apart. But I did see Friends coming together and I think we are, are afraid to confront social issues where we feel there are theological divergences and that, that's a pity. We've tried to organise groups to confront these issues but you find that those you really want there don't come. I don't like the way that fewer and fewer Ulster Friends, I think, turn up at Yearly Meeting and I have heard Ulster Friends say they feel Yearly Meeting is not [pause] they feel they don't belong any longer which is very sad.

In contrast to the position taken by Grange PM, Friends from South Belfast PM express a distinctively more liberal tone regarding the values and theology of Quakerism which is expressed on their website. For example, the following are extracts from the beliefs section:

A Way To God Quakers share a way of life rather than a set of beliefs. We seek to experience God directly, within ourselves and in our relationships with others and the world around us. These direct encounters with the Divine are where Quakers find meaning and purpose.

Quakers and Christianity The Quaker way has its roots in Christianity and finds inspiration in the Bible and the life and teachings of Jesus. Quakers also find meaning and value in other writings and in the teachings of other faiths and acknowledge that ours is not the only way.

Working for a better world Our religious experience leads us to place a special value on truth, equality, simplicity and peace. These testimonies, as they are known, are lived rather than written. They lead Quakers to translate their faith into action by working locally and globally for social justice, to support peacemakers and care for the environment (South Belfast Friends Meeting).

The South Belfast PM website also contains a leaflet with information about Quaker weddings and civil partnerships which accords heterosexual and same sex unions the same status (see appendix 7). The position taken by South Belfast PM is in marked contrast to the one taken by Grange PM and demonstrates the diverse perspectives on this issue within Ulster QM. Dublin Quakers have taken an

alternative approach which reflects the diverse views of Friends in the Meeting while at the same time stating their position about same sex marriage, as follows:

Dublin Quakers met on 15 April 2015 and discussed the forthcoming referendum on marriage equality. There was a diversity of views in the meeting as there is among Irish Quakers generally. At the heart of Friends' Christian practice is the freedom to think and express opinions and to speak or vote in seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The founder of Quakerism, George Fox, said as early as 1697 'marriage is the work of the Lord only ... for it is in God's ordinance and not man's ... we marry none; it is the Lord's work and we are but witnesses.' Since the introduction of civil partnerships, Quakers in Dublin have conducted Meetings for Worship to celebrate the committed relationships of our Members. As Christians, Quakers are deeply committed to equality, recognising that of God in every person. It is fundamental to Christianity that we should seek to love our neighbours as ourselves (Dublin Quakers).

Quakers in Dublin exemplify an approach which seeks to encompass the diverse views of Friends. It acknowledges that there are different opinions and at the same time locates their response within the context of Quaker values such as individual discernment, using traditional Christian language about love and equality. The next section explores how diversity was managed at a corporate level.

6.4. Complex identity management

As a response to the challenges of diversity within the Yearly Meeting outlined earlier in this chapter, Irish Quakerism has developed a model of complex identity management, which has been regarded by some Friends as leading to the avoidance of contentious subjects, but a necessary approach by others to keep together a small religious community and avoid a schism in the organisation. I argue that the relational unity of the Society was prioritised and that there was a conscious approach, when Friends were gathered together in regional or national Meetings, to find ways of 'managing' interactions between Friends to avoid 'harming' relationships when theological and political differences came to the fore. The following sections explore

the different mechanisms employed to manage conflict in IYM and then go on to identify the meaning of unity in the Irish Quaker context and how it was prioritised.

6.4.1. The structure of the Society

In section 6.2 I outlined some of the cultural features of IYM and how these have evolved in recent years to emphasise the diverse identities contained within the Society. In this section I explore how the organisational structure of IYM enabled the management of this diversity.

I begin with a brief summary of the current structure. The organisational structure of IYM is shown in Figure 6.1. (Quakers in Ireland, structure). Starting from the bottom layer of the diagram are the 29 PMs. Each PM has regular Meetings for Worship for business and sends representatives to the regional Monthly Meetings (MMs) which have the same function. The third layer of the structure of the Society is the QMs which represent the provinces of Leinster, Ulster and Munster and finally the Yearly Meeting. The locations of the Yearly Meetings rotate between different parts of the island of Ireland and in the past Friends have gathered in Dublin, Lisburn and Waterford. IYM met in Cork for the first time in 2013. The venue was significant and appeared to be linked to a wish to be inclusive of what is generally regarded by Friends as the most liberal part of the Yearly Meeting.



Figure 6.1: Organisational Structure of Ireland Yearly Meeting

The pyramid shape of the diagram tends to convey the impression of a hierarchical organisational structure which does not fit the Quaker 'spirit-led' model of decision making. However, the Yearly Meeting has had to steer the Society through some very contentious decision making processes in recent years within a structure where there is considerable autonomy, particularly at the level of local PMs. This has inevitably meant that the Quaker business method, outlined in chapter one, has been adapted for the specific circumstances that operate in IYM to take into account the distinctive regional identities of Friends. For example, Chapman referred to the particularly challenging circumstances around the revision of *Quaker Life and Practice* referred to in section 6.3.2 stating that:

All knew that the lofty ideals of Friends' business methods had not always been reached at our YMs and SYMs [special Yearly Meetings]. Over and over again, some or many Friends had felt aggrieved and not in unity with several of the recorded minutes. It seemed to them that majority rule was being practised (2013, 26).

In addition, because the Yearly Meeting operates across both Irish states, it has to encompass relevant legislation, and social policy, and respond to the financial implications of operating in two currencies. For example, one respondent talked

about the difficulties of having different Child Protection legislation to contend with which meant consistency of approach to this issue was problematic across IYM (field notes IYM, Dublin 2011).

Additionally, the decentralised structure of the Society encourages Friends to consider and test issues at each level before they go to the national body. The Quaker business method for making decisions is time consuming and some respondents found this way of doing things frustratingly slow. Harrison discusses modern Quaker belief in Ireland and is highly critical of what he regards as extreme liberalism and how it affects how Quaker business processes are understood. He refers to 'incomers' coming to Quakerism because they are unhappy about the authoritarian structures and creeds of their previous Christian denomination, but are not recognising Quakers have structures too, although they are very different from other Christian Churches (2006, 5). According to Harrison:

A helpful recognition of 'diversity' has sometimes resulted in the suppression of any awareness that diversity should find its meaning in 'unity' and has been destructive of Quaker ideas of community (2006, 6).

At the Yearly Meeting held in 2012 one of the sessions included feedback about a report of the Yearly Meeting Group on Civil Partnerships. This was in response to a letter received by the Yearly Meeting from Junior Yearly Meeting in 2010 following legislation on Civil Partnership that had been passed in the Republic of Ireland in 2004 and in Northern Ireland in 2005.⁹¹ The report stated that 'the YM Nominations Committee was concerned that this group should not only represent the three QMs but also reflect the spectrum of opinion among Friends on this complex and

91 The letter was from Young Friends expressing concern about the implications of the legislation on the Religious Society of Friends (Report of Civil Partnership Group to Ireland Yearly Meeting 2012).

challenging matter' (IYM 2012). In proposing to the Yearly Meeting that the decision about whether to have a special Meeting for Worship for Civil Partnership or not should be devolved to a local level, the authors of the report acknowledged the diversity of views among members of the group and their lack of confidence that consensus could be found about this issue within the Society. It was further suggested that PMs were not obliged to agree to a request if it did not accord with the theological outlook of the Meeting and if a Meeting for Worship was agreed upon, it would be a celebration of the Civil Partnership not a blessing. The clerk of the Yearly Meeting stressed that this was not a compromise. It was up to each PM to oversee these matters asserting that 'they will be guided' and that there is already diversity about how funerals and other occasions are conducted (field notes, IYM, Dublin 2012)

I observed that the issue was managed very carefully: the report was read out verbatim and there was a short time allocated for Friends' reaction to the recommendations. My perception was that this was done deliberately to minimise potential for damaging conflict. One respondent talked about the way that Meetings for Worship for Civil Partnerships were dealt with – as an 'Irish solution to an Irish problem' - that is, half dealing with the issue but not fully dealing with it. This reaction contrasted with other respondents who also had a personal interest in the outcome. They suggested that it was progress which could not have been foreseen when the issue was originally raised. Interestingly the theme of that Yearly Meeting was 'Building Community', with the sub-heading – 'Dear Friends let us love one another, for love comes from God' (1 John Ch. 4 v 7) (field notes, IYM, Dublin 2012). The

structure of the Society and how unity was promoted leads on to another significant mechanism which is explored in the next section.

6.4.2. The role of clerks and other key individuals

This comment by Rachel Bewley-Bateman, a former Yearly Meeting clerk, encapsulates my observations about the role of clerks in maintaining the unity of the Society:

We have a broad theological spread and a very broad political spread and the...something which is always very important to us is the unity of the Yearly Meeting. We are sensitive to the diversity within our Yearly Meeting and endeavour to seek God's will for us all. Whether it is religion or politics, we are strengthened partly by family ties, and partly by denominational ties, if you want to call them that. The Yearly Meeting covers the 32 counties of Ireland and all clerks know that that is how we want it to be and how we want it to continue to be.

When contentious issues come to the Yearly Meeting they are very carefully 'managed' by the Friends responsible for the Yearly Meeting in session. According to a respondent, if a potentially divisive issue such as the revision of *Quaker Life and Practice* needed to be undertaken, there was careful structuring of how this would be managed, taking a long-term approach and waiting for certain Friends to carry things forward. This respondent said:

...and it was waited on [until] we had a particular clerk...a lot of politics goes on in Quakers don't ever let anybody tell you there isn't. It is a very political organisation, it's small key but it's a political organisation...people if they want something to work ok they are very careful who they select to make it work... and there's a level of thought, long thought gone into something. There's a level of patience sometimes drives others up the walls even including myself about the urgency of doing things.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the 'Troubles' highlighted political divisions within the Society and made it difficult to bring this issue to the Yearly Meeting for open discussion. This extract from a contribution made by Friends to *The Believers*

Enquiry, 1997/98, illustrates the way that the Society sought to preserve unity over this highly contentious issue:

Something that we have all been very conscious of over the years is the importance that we have one united Yearly Meeting and that there shouldn't at any point, whether it be for religious or political reasons, be a division within the Society, and this has come before us in different times and different ways over the years... Then equally at the early part of the Troubles, it was decided not to have a session at Yearly Meeting... (Kenny 1998, 150).

This meant, for example, that the work of Quaker House, discussed in chapter four, would only be talked about in general terms rather than in specific ones. The other reason for circumspection about this 'Troubles'-related project was to do with the sensitivity of the work which involved confidential meetings between paramilitaries, politicians and others involved in conflict reduction dialogue.

However, this approach was not always effective as a number of respondents observed, and is illustrated by Alan Quilley's observation that:

We did become involved with a developing consciousness at one Yearly Meeting that there was a big rift between southern Friends and northern Friends, and there were some exchanges during the Yearly Meeting where it became quite clear that some of the southern Friends just had no idea what it was like to be living in the north. One was saying that she was surprised when she came north to see all these painted curb stones and this sort of thing. And so there was an attempt by the Yearly Meeting to set up regular meetings... We were members of the peace process committee.

A number of respondents talked about the Yearly Meeting mentioned above where things 'came to a head', and the response of IYM in setting up the peace process committee. One respondent observed that it was very significant that an evangelical Friend who had been personally affected by the 'Troubles' was on that committee. Friends generally appreciated the events that were organised to talk more openly and share experiences of the 'Troubles', in order to improve communication between Friends in the Republic and Northern Ireland. Philip Jacob commented that:

Our discussion was focused on emotions and identity. We tried to get a deeper knowledge and understanding of who we are, and how our backgrounds and experiences have shaped this view (1996, 2).

At the end of one Yearly Meeting session, I observed that the reading included an extract from *Quaker Life and Practice* which emphasised unity and love. Felicity McCartney (the clerk of the Yearly Meeting at the time) said that there is a particular way in which things are talked about and that is something that IYM really values. McCartney said that it is not possible to have these difficult conversations if Friends aren't willing to have these conversations in a particular way that involves openness but is very slow, saying that there has to be a slow approach; it has to be handled very sensitively with a great deal of respect for different views. McCartney added that Friends who threaten to withdraw or who become so committed to one particular perspective may not see or may not agree with this approach or are frustrated by it which was apparent from my observations (field notes IYM, Dublin 2012).

6.4.3. Countering essentialism

Another aspect of this complex identity management model is to tackle essentialisation within the Society. As outlined in chapter five, essentialism refers to an understanding of identity which is based on the concept that it is formed by innate characteristics within people and is fixed, rather than shaped by social relationships and open to change. According to Alvesson, this concept of identity can be oversimplistic when applied to organisations and needs 'careful interpretation' (2002, 187). My findings suggest that IYM took conscious steps to help to break down the boundaries between the different traditions within the Society. This was helped by the all-Ireland nature of the Religious Society of Friends and regular opportunities for Friends to meet one another. These include inreach events such as the one held in

2001 about exploring diversity within the Society.⁹² Another example is the Yearly Meeting I attended in 2012 where there were activities that encompassed the different cultural traditions such as hymn singing in Irish and English, a ceilidh (traditional Irish dancing and music), and a choice of either bible study or worship sharing at the beginning of the daily sessions. There were also the special interest groups mentioned in section 6.2.2.

A more inclusive approach was also evident at the local level of the Society as is illustrated by the following quote:

I went there and it happened to be the Sunday when they were reading the Query and they read it both in English and in Irish and I remember coming back to my own Meeting and saying just I was amazed in (name of PM) they have it in Irish as well...but sometime after that we started it in Irish in (respondent's PM) as well. They're small gestures I know sometimes they seem to be artificial and superficial and external. To me they aren't - they speak volumes about an openness.

The use of the Irish language during Meetings for Worship appeared to have a very positive impact on the respondent who is from a culturally-Catholic background.

Friends from Meetings in the Republic and Northern Ireland were also encouraged to visit each other (Jacob 1996, 2). A respondent talked about how her understanding of Friends in Northern Ireland had changed since getting to know them:

I got to know Friends in the north so much better from staying with them and how I have got quite close to some of them even though, now we're all kisses and hugs when we meet and people at my Meeting [ask] what's going on there?...What we did we went round to each other's Quarterly Meetings and stayed with one another and I got to know how things were on the ground in a lot. I stayed with an attender in (name of PM) Meeting whose son was attending Friend's school Lisburn and in his local Protestant community he was getting beaten up because they said 'you're not a real Prod. Quakers are not real Prods'.

⁹² Inreach is work that builds communication and bonds between people within organisations. The Inreach event referred to above was the subject of an article in *The Friendly Word* (Archer 2001, 8-9) entitled *INREACH 2001: Celebrating our Diversity* which was a very positive account of the workshop.

The example above tends to support the 'contact hypothesis' outlined in Mitchell and Ganiel's work which suggests that when people who have very different, potentially 'oppositional', identities meet and get to know each other they tend to moderate their views and become more open-minded (2011, 116). The next section explores what unity represents in the Irish Quaker context.

6.5. The meaning of unity for Irish Friends

My findings suggest that for Irish Quakerism conflict management and ways of promoting unity are intrinsically linked. As outlined in the previous section, conflict was managed through the structure of the Society, for example, by devolving certain contentious decisions to the local level. The role of individual Friends, particularly clerks of the Yearly Meeting, was significant and time was taken to wait for the appropriate conditions when difficult issues were to be addressed. Care was taken to nominate Friends from the different traditions within the Society when a committee was established, such as the support committee for Quaker House and the Yearly Meeting group on Civil Partnerships, so that their recommendations had the required authority.

The principles of unity and love (prioritising relationships) were stressed in national gatherings especially when Friends were 'discerning' the way forward in their decision-making. It was very important to Friends that the all-Ireland nature of the Society was maintained. This meant at times that certain issues (particularly related to the 'Troubles') were not taken to the Yearly Meeting but were discussed separately. There was also a conscious approach to reflect the diversity of the Yearly Meeting in the content of Quaker events and there were inreach activities to enable

Friends to learn about each other's perspectives. However, Friends recognised that there is a limit to how much these approaches can overcome some of the fundamental differences between them. This respondent's comment appears to encapsulate what unity means in the Irish Quaker context:

There's a big difference between unity and uniformity. Let's do what we can together but have the freedom to do things in our own particular way.

Thus it can be argued that the factors outlined above indicate that Irish Friends have developed a form of relational unity which is dependent on strengthening bonds between each other while leaving major differences intact. The risks inherent in the maintenance of unity through relationships are discussed more fully in the next chapter.

6.6. Chapter summary

This chapter explored the diverse culture and identity of Irish Quakerism and gave examples of particularly contentious issues within the Society. I discussed some of the ways that these were managed by IYM, particularly in terms of organisational structure, 'leadership' roles and tackling essentialism within the Society, and what unity means in the context of Irish Quakerism. The next chapter recaps the main research findings from this study.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESEARCH FINDINGS

7.1. Introduction

This chapter begins with a summary of the main findings from the literature about sectarianism in Ireland (7.2). I go on to recap how sectarianism impacted on the positioning of Friends in Irish society and outline the growth of a distinctive political and theological Quaker culture (7.3). I chart the key findings from my fieldwork about Friends' individual identities outlined in the identity matrix. I argue that these identities are diverse and hybrid, and encompass a broad political and theological spectrum and that some Friends have negotiated and transcended aspects of their core identity (7.4). Section 7.5 asserts that the diverse individual identities of Friends are mirrored by the corporate identity of IYM and that this has created tensions within the Society (examples were explored in chapter six). I discuss my findings that IYM has prioritised the relational unity of the Society, as opposed to doctrinal or ideological unity (7.6), and the extent to which the category 'Quaker' works as a meta-identity within the organisation (7.7). I argue that IYM responded to its diverse membership by developing a model of complex identity management (7.8). I then recap the main elements of this approach and look at some of the consequences for Irish Quakerism (7.9).

7.2. Sectarianism in Ireland

In chapter one I outlined the complexities of formulating a 'balanced' historical narrative where different claims are made about the past by communities in conflict with each other. I also referred to the reasons why I chose particular milestone events to chronicle the development of sectarianism in Ireland, beginning with the

Anglo-Norman conquest in the twelfth century, touching on subsequent examples of major political and social upheavals and concluding with the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

I described the circumstances and rationale for the partition of Ireland in chapter three which proved to be an unsuccessful attempt by the British government to address the competing demands of republicans and loyalists on the island. After partition the two Irish states began a process of distinctive socio-political development which was traced in chapter five. I set out some of the significant factors that helped to shape the identity and political ideology of the two communities in the newly created Northern Ireland state. For example, the largely autonomous Unionist government in Northern Ireland introduced policies in sectors such as local elections, housing, education and employment which were detrimental to the civil rights of the large Catholic minority. Northern Ireland, which had actively supported the war effort during the First World War, was given guarantees by the British government about the future constitutional status of the state. The Irish Free State was initially preoccupied by the hostilities between those republicans who supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty and those who were opposed to it. After the civil war ended the pro-Treaty republicans were in the political ascendancy and their priority was to create a distinctively Gaelic Irish post-colonial society. The Irish Free State remained neutral during the Second World War and eventually declared itself a Republic.

Some of the main triggers and explanations for the origins of the 'Troubles' which broke out in the late 1960s were summarised and analysed in chapter three. I drew on the definition of sectarianism in Ireland developed by Liechty and Clegg and

examined the role of religion in Irish sectarianism which is highly contested in the Academy. For example, Steve Bruce and Claire Mitchell stress the importance that religion and religious beliefs had on the creation of sectarianism and conflict between the nationalist and unionist communities following the partition of Ireland. However, other commentators such as Pamela Clayton place more emphasis on the impact of English colonial policy on Ireland in institutionalising sectarianism. Conversely, Liechty and Clegg view Irish sectarianism as a holistic system formed and reinforced by many different factors, especially religion.

The impact of sectarianism was experienced by people on a personal, social and political level, and as Marianne Elliott asserts, not just restricted to Northern Ireland but impacted on people throughout the island. Jennifer Todd's research about oppositional identity and sectarianism in Ireland looks at how this functions and is maintained. Todd refers to 'symbolic distinctions' that operate in the two Irish states that influence the participation or sense of belonging or exclusion of people from society. I gave a number of examples in the thesis about how these distinctions work including some of the experiences of the respondents in my study. Todd contends that structural and political change is a prerequisite to enable fuller participation for people in society as equal citizens, and to help promote transition from oppositional/fixed to more fluid identity categories.

7.3. The impact of sectarianism on Irish Quakerism

In chapter four I argued that sectarianism has had a distinctive impact on the Religious Society of Friends from the organisation's early settlement in Ireland. The conflict and social upheaval endemic in the country was a challenge to Friends'

peace testimony which is a fundamental aspect of Irish Quaker theology. The Society's response was to try to maintain a low key presence in their local communities and remain apart from involvement in sectarian-related conflict. For example, Friends were instructed by their National Meeting to destroy their weapons and avoid taking sides during the 1798 Rebellion, although they gave practical assistance to those affected by hostilities between the different groups. In addition, I discussed other factors that shaped the nature of Irish Quakerism. For example, Quakers faced restrictions, like other Dissenters and Roman Catholics, on their participation in society because of the penal laws. Quakers also experienced further persecution because of their theological beliefs which led to their refusal to conform to certain social conventions or pay tithes; they developed ways of supporting each other and imposing discipline by setting up an organisational structure based on the model introduced by George Fox. In time, as restrictions on Dissenters were relaxed, Friends occupied a position in society as merchants, in trade and the professions – they were seen as part of the Protestant community but not in the mainstream of Protestantism.

The role of Quakers during the period of the 'Great Famine' during the 1840s was highly significant for the future standing of Friends. The provision of non-sectarian relief during the famine years led to Friends having a reputation for neutrality which proved to be useful for those involved in 'Troubles'-related work. From the late nineteenth century onwards, I found that Irish Friends began to move away from a position of detachment towards the 'Irish Question' when a small number of Friends supported the Irish Home Rule campaign and then later expressions of Irish Republicanism. However, the majority of Friends supported the Union and were

concerned about the influence of the Roman Catholic Church if the Home Rule campaign was successful. The issue of whether it was possible or desirable to maintain political 'neutrality' came to the fore again during the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland, when the complex identity of the Society was highlighted and challenged by the sectarian nature of the conflict.

7.3.1. Irish Quaker culture

Within the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland societal, political and regional factors create distinctive local Quaker cultures, a theme that was explored in chapters four, five and six. For example, a significant theological divergence occurred within the Society triggered by the mid-nineteenth century evangelical revival which had a strong influence on Ulster Friends. Ulster Quakerism was already distinctive because of the dominance of Presbyterianism in that part of Ireland. After the partition of the country the divergent social and political dimensions of the newly created Irish Free State and Northern Ireland had a further impact on the regional culture of Quakerism which was explored in chapter four. As Friends adjusted to the new political systems they continued to maintain their all-Ireland structure and ethos which was facilitated by the Quaker family dynasties. However, a political divergence was beginning to open up in the Society as some Friends began to become more actively involved in the structures of the new Irish states.

In chapter five there are observations by some of the respondents that Irish Quakerism tends to be identified as a British middle-class, Protestant grouping. However, the culture of the Society has undergone some changes for a number of reasons, including the impact of Friends from culturally-Catholic backgrounds, who

tend to be one of the main sources of Friends joining by ‘convincement’ and liberal in their theological outlook. Some respondents raised concerns about how newcomers to Quakerism learn about how things are done, for example, in terms of the Quaker business method. This point illustrates the different perceptions of ‘birthright’ and ‘convinced’ Friends – the latter sometimes wanting to change Quaker processes because they regard them as too slow and not responsive enough to current events. Conversely, some ‘birthright’ Friends expressed concern that Quaker tradition and culture will become too ‘diluted’ because of influence of Friends from different cultural and theological backgrounds (particularly Catholicism).

7.4. Hybrid identities

In chapter five I identified two of the main theoretical perspectives about the formation of social identity – innate and socially constructed – and indicated that for the purposes of this study, I focus mainly on the latter. I outlined the substantial themes in the literature about identity construction drawing on the work of Richard Jenkins, Steph Lawler and others. I then linked this body of work to the extensive qualitative research on identity and sectarianism in Ireland undertaken by Jennifer Todd, explored the main findings of this study and compared and contrasted them with mine.

The Quaker identity matrix in chapter five illustrated the diverse and hybrid identity of individual Friends. For example, I found that Friends from Catholic backgrounds in the Republic of Ireland tend to remain culturally-Catholic despite taking on an identity as a member of a nonconformist denomination. In terms of their national identity, these Friends have what Todd refers to as a ‘banal’ or taken for granted identity as

members of the majority group in the Republic. The perception that Quakerism is a mainly Protestant, British middle-class institution has caused them some discomfort. Some Friends from other Christian backgrounds, gave examples of Catholic 'sectarianism' and portrayed a sense of having to try harder to be accepted as fully Irish, although according to some of my respondents this appears to be changing. This last finding chimes with Todd's work about the 'symbolic distinctions' that operate in both of the Irish states which create a sense of belonging or exclusion.

It can also be argued that these distinctions were also visible within IYM, but were played out differently than in the wider society. 'Symbolic distinctions' within Quakerism were not directly Catholic and Protestant (although these were in the background) but were more to do with tensions between Friends about the 'true' nature of Quakerism. There was clear evidence from the interviews that a different relationship to being Quaker was demonstrated by some Friends, in particular over claims that Quaker theology is about the testimonies (by liberal Friends) or about traditional Christian beliefs (by evangelical Friends). Liberal Friends also used a broader range of terms when they described their spiritual life than evangelical Friends, and some were also exploring other spiritual or humanistic paths. A number of evangelical Friends were concerned about the theological direction of the Society, suggesting that it was moving away from its Christian roots to be more about social activism than a belief in biblical truths and salvation through relationship with Jesus Christ. This theme is explored further in section 7.5.

All of the respondents avoided self-identifying as Protestant, for a number of reasons. For culturally-Catholic Friends there are negative associations attached to joining a

Christian denomination identified with religious and political divisions, other Friends do not regard themselves as 'culturally' Protestant and those using the labels Quaker not Protestant (or in some instances Dissenter) see these as offering a third way through sectarian divisions in the wider society, especially in Northern Ireland. However, many of the respondents were aware of Quakers, especially in the rural areas of Northern Ireland, who more closely reflect the unionist Protestant profile of some communities there, although I was unable to interview anyone from this strand of Irish Quakerism to confirm this for myself.

7.4.1. Sectarianism was negotiated and transcended

The evidence about negotiation and transcendence was outlined mainly, but not exclusively, in the case studies in chapter five. There is the example of 'Peter', a Northern Ireland Friend, who challenged sectarianism in his community and workplace. His choice of party political affiliation and dual national identity demonstrate his commitment to finding a middle way through sectarianism. He also acted as a 'bridge' between the different theological strands of Irish Quakerism. The other example is of 'Sean' whose hybrid identity encompassed different strands of potentially 'oppositional' labels, that is, someone from a nationalist background and culturally Catholic in a minority nonconformist denomination in the Republic of Ireland. He demonstrates a capacity to critically examine 'sectarian' aspects of his cultural heritage and find ways of relating to other Friends from very different political and theological backgrounds. There was also evidence of other Friends who had a pivotal role in bridge building within the Society, especially in terms of the liberal/evangelical division. The significant role of certain Friends, particularly 'birthright' Quakers from the evangelical wing of IYM, in helping to make progress on

contentious issues was something that was raised by many respondents. These Friends acted as cross-over figures between the different traditions within the Society.

During the 'Troubles', as outlined in chapter four, a number of Friends were actively involved in cross-community projects that sought to challenge sectarianism and reduce sectarian-related violence. Some Friends were also members of non-Quaker groups and organisations with similar aims. Quaker Service is a registered charity in Northern Ireland that maintains a commitment to this work.

7.5. Complex corporate identity

The evidence for my assertions about the complex identity of IYM is based on what respondents said about their own identities and their observations about the culture of IYM and how it operates, and my own observations during the fieldwork stage of the research. I also spoke to Friends from other Yearly Meetings who were based in Ireland for a number of years and refer to the observations made by Elizabeth Duke, who did research in Ireland about Friends' understanding of salvation in 2010.⁹³

IYM manages tension and conflict about contentious issues which result from the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of its membership; other faith groups are struggling with similar issues, such as attitudes towards homosexuality and the role of women in the Church. For example, within the Church of England accommodation with those opposed to women bishops has been found after 20 years of contention between opposing factions and the General Synod recently voted to introduce legislation to appoint women bishops. Unity is currently maintained but is likely to be

93 It is interesting to note that in her fieldwork Duke used two different focus questions to elicit the meaning of 'salvation' for Friends depending on whether she was addressing a mainly evangelical or liberal grouping (Duke's field work notes 2012b).

more problematic in the future as other contentious issues strain the balance between liberal and evangelical wings of Anglicanism, especially if Anglican Churches in more conservative societies begin to move towards a more congregational model. Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury, expressed his great concern about a possible future schism in worldwide Anglicanism and said the only approach in place to enable the Church to stay together was ‘...prayer and obedience’ (Brown 2014, 11).

As Steph Lawler posits:

If...people have multiple identities and identification, does every group belonging rely either on the suppression of some forms of identity or an endless internecine strife between different factions within the category? (2014, 167).

The following section addresses this subject in a number of ways.

7.6. Relational unity is prioritised

In chapter six I argued that one of the consistent themes from the interview data was that the unity of the Society was viewed as being paramount and when Friends talked about what they meant by unity they referred to the avoidance of harming relationships or hurting each other’s feelings by highlighting political and theological differences. I termed this form of unity ‘relational’ as opposed to other types centred on doctrine or ideology. Other Friends found this approach problematic and felt that conflict had been silenced and that on occasions they had silenced themselves, and wanted more openness and discussion about areas of disagreement.

7.6.1. Comparison with other groups

I now compare the Irish Quaker approach to unity with the approach of other groups.

For example, one model is provided by Simon Best who in his work about adolescent Quakers in BYM refers to them as a 'Community of Intimacy', asserting that:

This is a collective grouping which places emphasis on belonging to the group, inter-personal networks secured by friendships, shared values, the expression of identity in some form and separateness of the group from others...(2010, 188).

Best goes on to argue that the 'Community of Intimacy' exists both within the time set aside for Quaker events and in the networks of friendships outside of specifically 'Quaker-time'. Furthermore, Best suggests that 'the Community of Intimacy is central in terms of forming both group and individual identity and it provides the group with unity' (2010, 188). There are some parallels with Irish Quakerism particularly in terms of friendship networks and prioritising relationships. However, there are major differences between British adolescent Quakers and Quakers in Ireland in terms of demographic factors, identity and attitudes to belief. For example, Best asserts that within the culture of adolescent Quakers belief is marginal and diverse. Best goes on to suggest that sharing of personal beliefs is encouraged and not regarded as a threat to the unity of the community (2010, 173). Conversely, both liberal and evangelical Friends in Ireland talked about their discomfort at hearing the ministry of Friends that did not match their theological perspectives. This was more evident in Meetings that spanned not just liberal and evangelical outlooks but also atheist and others. There seems to be an acceptance that tension about the different forms of religious expression is best left to Friends to work out at a local level.

An example of unity closer to the Irish Quaker model is possibly evident at the international level of the Religious Society of Friends. The worldwide theological diversity of Quakers, explained in chapter one, was highlighted at the 2012 World Conference of Friends in Kenya, where the theme was 'Being Salt and Light – Friends living the Kingdom of God in a broken world'. According to Judi Brill, who was a participant at the conference, 'we got up close and personal with people's ideas and that was challenging'. Brill noticed a number of things about the other participants at the conference and the way it was structured. For example, the experience of Friends spending time together, eating together and participating in various workshops and social activities helped them to bond. The conference participants were positively influenced by the peace and reconciliation workshops held before the main event. As Brill observed 'it was the peace work that drew people together...running through the middle' but this was not the primary theme of the conference. The workshop on spiritual language was very popular and helped Brill to feel closer to evangelical Friends – she observed that the participants were very enthusiastically trying to find a common language. However, Brill sensed that at the end of the conference Friends went away with their primary theological Quaker identity untouched and that was particularly evident in respect of the evangelical Quakers affiliated with Friends United Mission. According to Elizabeth Duke, Friends United Mission has a large presence in Kenya (2012a, 3).

Brill shared her impressions that there was no clear sense of unity and it was difficult to find a common bond theologically in terms of language, forms of worship and attitudes to social issues, particularly homosexuality. However, bonding did take place and friendships developed because of the shared experience of attending the

event but the theological differences between Friends were left intact (personal correspondence, January 2015). This is reminiscent of an Irish respondent who said: 'Of course you did not shift inside much... I know from myself that I have to keep translating their talk into language that I can understand'.

It can be argued that for the period of the conference Friends experienced a form of relational unity, like I observed in IYM. Furthermore, because there is no overarching doctrine or creed that Quakers have to subscribe to, pronounced regional differences in how Quakerism is expressed can be accommodated as Friends return to their Yearly Meetings. Caroline Plüss' study of liberal British Quakerism tends to support this perspective, in that she suggests that the unity of Friends is maintained by the lack of systematic theology so that: 'It prevents adherents of conflicting claims from within Quakerism from proving that their respective insights are incompatible' (1995, 177). Plüss goes on to assert that the lack of a doctrinal creed means that Friends are not required to hold a specific set of beliefs and discernment of belief is left to the individual. As Plüss argues:

The absence of systematization of Quaker belief protects group unity, as Quaker faith is able to integrate a variety of belief items into its content without this being shown to give rise to inconsistencies amongst elements of Quaker belief. Thus Quaker belief is highly flexible in absorbing cultural change, or changes in the ideological orientations of the membership (1995, 177).

According to Plüss, unity is further preserved by transcendence. She contends that this is one of the central precepts of Quakerism and is based on the notion that the shared experience of Friends in worship takes them beyond the content of different beliefs. In her discussion about how transcendence operates with regard to the Quaker business method, Plüss asserts that:

As long as contradictions in Friends' experiences of transcendence remain manifest, Quakers abstain from making decisions. Friends only make decisions once the emergence of a group consensus indicates that their experience of transcendence is sufficient (1998, 236).

In addition, Plüss refers to Friends' friendship networks and knowledge of shared values having an important part to play in protecting unity (1995, 177-8). While the latter point is true of IYM, belief is significant within the Society not marginal, as indicated in chapter six, and Irish Quakerism is more Christo-centric than its British counterpart. There are therefore continuing challenges to unity posed by competing views about Irish Quaker theology.

7.7. Quakerism as a meta-identity

This section considers whether there is evidence to suggest that the identity category 'Quaker' helps with unity because it rises above other identity labels and creates space from 'worldly' identities that remind Friends of their differences. As one Friend wrote in an article 'Establishing Quakerism in the Irish Culture': 'even if we do come from different cultures, if we can listen to the holy Spirit, communication is possible across the divide' (Crowley 1997, 9). Some Friends also stress the importance of seeing Quakerism as a worldwide organisation that can overcome national and political boundaries (Crowley 1997, 9). However, my findings show that some respondents did not share this perspective about the international context of the Religious Society of Friends and their national identity was very important to them.

It can be argued that for liberal Yearly Meetings such as BYM, Quaker as a meta-identity works reasonably well because there is a general acceptance that, as Dandelion argues, in liberal theology belief is marginal and what is prioritised is the 'behavioural creed'; worship based on silence allows for differences to be masked or

contained. However in IYM there isn't one over-arching identity that Friends subscribe to. Within the Society there are many identities including evangelical and liberal traditions and different national identities. Consequently it is less clear what the shared identity is for Irish Quakers and there is no 'universal subject'; a concept outlined by Rachel Muers.

In my research I found many examples of bridge-building by individuals and by the corporate organisation to overcome differences between Friends and to develop a stronger Quaker meta-identity. For example, in drawing up the Report of Civil Partnership Group for IYM, the committee used a form of language that consciously emphasises the values that Friends share by identifying a list of core values underpinning Quaker beliefs regarding same-sex attraction (Ireland Yearly Meeting 2012). These values include: acceptance and mutual respect, a non-judgemental attitude, commitment to social justice and equality, and welcoming and supporting the spiritual development of all people drawn to Quakerism irrespective of their sexual orientation.

However, there is clearly disagreement about how these values should be carried out in practice, particularly between those Friends who focus on the testimonies and others who are more biblically-based, like the evangelical Friend who talked about Quakerism being like a wrapping for her Christian faith in chapter six. Liberal Friends also put different emphasis on which of the testimonies they feel most drawn to and have varying interpretations of what they mean. For example, the Friend in chapter five who used the language of the testimonies of truth and equality as part of his 'coming out' journey within Quakerism. There were also other Friends during the

‘Troubles’ who understood that the peace testimony necessarily involved dialogue with republican and loyalists paramilitaries, despite the disapproval of some Friends who had a different understanding of the same testimony.

Therefore it is possible to argue that Quaker as a meta-identity for Friends in Ireland is both strong and weak depending on the circumstances. It can work when differences between Friends are de-emphasised and common values highlighted. It is more problematic when Friends individualise their Quaker identity and attachment to different and possibly conflicting ways of being Quaker. It is also noteworthy that respondents had different degrees of connection to their Quaker identity and for some it was one of a number of equally significant identity categories. However, there is some evidence that Quaker as a meta-identity works better on a political level for some Friends as a way of challenging sectarianism in the wider society and this will be explored in section 8.3.

7.8. Management of diverse identities and conflict

In chapter six I argued that in order to preserve relational unity IYM found a way of managing the diverse identity of the corporate body. This was done through the structure of the organisation, by Friends in key roles, by using the Quaker business method in a particular way when contentious decisions were made, and by organising events that encompass the different traditions and give Friends opportunities to develop closer connections. At the same time there is recognition that differences in how Friends relate to their Quakerism remain intact but that in order to avoid harming relationships it necessary is to consider how these are expressed. As one respondent remarked:

The paragraph quoted for many years on the front of *The Friend* 'in essentials unity in non-essentials liberty in all things charity'...for Quakers is important.

Another respondent recognised the positive aspects of bringing contentious issues out into the open in a sensitive way. He said:

Although painful the subject of homosexuality has helped people talk about things, which is actually quite healthy. Previous to this there was never any need to discuss things like this, everything was done by instinct. You were aware of things you said and things you did not say. You were aware of what the other people thought because you'd grown up with them all your life, so you did not really have to have some huge discussion about [these issues].

The Irish case study of conflict management will now be contrasted with other Quaker Yearly Meetings in order to assess the similarities and differences. For example, Douglas Kline explores the tensions and conflict within BYM triggered by what he refers to as: 'The Trident Ploughshares Incident' (2002, 134). This came about in 1997 after an organisation called Trident Ploughshares 2000⁹⁴ requested training from Turning the Tide (TTT) – a Quaker group who offer training, from a spiritual basis, in non-violent methods of taking direct action (Kline 2002, 134). Initially the request was accepted and the intention to train members of Trident Ploughshares 2000 was taken to Meeting for Sufferings (MfS).⁹⁵

According to Kline, it became apparent at the Meeting that some Friends had strong reservations about TTT training members of a group who had the explicit intention of going into the Faslane naval base in Scotland and causing damage to military equipment thereby breaking the law. Unity about these matters could not be found at the Meeting so a decision about whether the training should be offered or not was deferred. On a theological level the 'lack of unity' was related to Friends' different

⁹⁴ Trident Ploughshares uses non-violent direct action to remove Britain's Trident nuclear weapon system (Trident Ploughshares).

⁹⁵ Meeting for Sufferings is a Quaker decision-making body of the national organisation. The reason for the name of this group, which dates back to the seventeenth century, is explained in chapter four.

interpretations (or guidance by the 'inner light') about the appropriate response to the peace testimony (Kline 2002, 135-137). Kline goes on to document the way in which the clerk of MfS carefully structured the next Meeting by reminding Friends about the need to follow the discipline of the Quaker business method and including a discussion about the role of TTT and relevant legal issues. This approach resulted in unity among Friends and a minute which gave the go ahead for the training with some conditions attached (2002, 143-144). Kline suggests that this example demonstrates that:

The Quaker disposition directs intra-denominational conflicts into business meetings and committees where Friends can contain the dispute. This practice, with the cognitive structures of 'conflict is violence' and 'Pacifist conflict is absurd', dissuades other forms of conflict management and promotes a Quaker identity that suggests Friends avoid conflict (Kline 2002, 315).

If a theological interpretation of the Quaker business method was applied to the Trident Ploughshares case it could be argued that it was used effectively to ensure that different perspectives were shared and most importantly heard in an atmosphere which allowed calm consideration of the issues. This is how decision-making works within Quakerism and it is part of Quaker theology not evidence of conflict avoidance. Conversely, Kline suggests that a sociological analysis of the same case considers the role of power dynamics and how they work within the organisation to deal with diverse views and conflict. The Quaker business method can therefore be viewed as a mechanism whereby clerks exercise authority to fulfil their role which also involves containing conflict over contentious issues (Kline 2002, 315-316).

In addition, Kline argues that the meaning attached to conflict historically within the Society has changed over time in that:

Conflict was once central to the Quaker cultural model, as Friends sought to bring a new millennium through a 'lamb's war'. When Friends established the peace testimony, 'conflict' was no longer central to their engagement with the world for the Quaker interpretation of the world. Today, unity dominates the Quaker imagination particularly in the process of decision-making as Friends form minutes, which reflect the general will of the decision-making body. Quakerly dispositions enact particular strategies and tactics in the management of conflict situations. Withdrawal and avoidance are typically recognised as the primary means to manage conflicts within the Society, using silence and self-questioning to forestall overt dispute. Yielding is common when Friends aim to lay aside their needs for the sake of the social contract or the wider body. In these situations the relationship is viewed as more important than the personal need (2002, 320-321).

Kline contends that it was relational not doctrinal unity that was prioritised in BYM which has parallels with my findings about Irish Friends. However, as I go on to outline in section 8.2.2, it is possible to argue that the 'behavioural creed' (explained in chapter one) that operates in BYM is a much more significant factor in maintaining unity that in the Irish Quaker context.

Like Kline, Susan Robson explores the issue of conflict in BYM and contends that Friends are more comfortable focusing on conflict in the wider world than on internal conflict (2008, 142). Robson is overtly critical of what she regards as conflict avoidance within the organisation, as the following quote illustrates:

This study shows the obverse of the espoused theory that Quakers should mend the world and live in a peaceable kingdom without conflict. It shows that Quakers avert their minds from their own conflicts, which do exist. When this proves impossible they are uncertain and unskilled in handling them. This is the position from which they encourage the rest of the world to resolve its conflicts (2005, 231).

Robson asserts that her study uncovered many examples of conflict within BYM and that Quakers are no different from other groups in this respect. She found that the two main responses to conflict were aversion and prioritising community relationships over finding the 'right' outcome for the conflict (2008, 143-144). Like Kline's work, the

focus on relationships within the group in responding to conflict chimes with my findings about relational unity being so important for Quakers in Ireland. It is interesting to note that unlike Irish Quakerism, theological differences were not identified as a major source of conflict by the British Friends interviewed for Robson's study (2008, 147). Robson goes on to suggest that the culture of Quakerism, as it operates in Britain, restricted the development of positive ways of handling internal conflict and that in order to make progress on conflict management in the future it would be necessary for Friends to examine some of the fundamental values within their cultural identity (2005, 232).

Robson also contrasts how conflict is managed by British and Irish Quakerism and highlights what she considers is the inadequate approach of BYM compared to IYM (2008, 155). She asserts that the two Yearly Meetings mirror the culture of the societies where they are located in terms of approaches to conflict and that Quakerism in Britain 'reflects the polite and restrained tradition of not talking about religion or politics' (2008, 155). Robson goes on to suggest that:

...in a tradition riven by religious affiliation enacted in politics Ireland Yearly Meeting is robust enough to grasp the nettle of conflict with firmness (2008, 155).

The implication that Irish Quakers are much more open about their differences and tackle conflict robustly and that this is the norm in Ireland, contrasts somewhat with the observations of my respondents. Robson's observations seem to be largely based on impressions gained from limited information about conflict-management in IYM and give a rather narrow impression of the situation.⁹⁶ My findings indicate that how conflict is managed in Ireland is much more complex, as is explored in the next

⁹⁶ In her most recent work Susan Robson revised her observations about conflict handling in IYM and acknowledges the difficulties there were in managing certain contentious issues within the Society (2014, 70).

sections of the chapter which examines some of the implications of the Irish Quaker model of complex identity management.

7.9. Friends' responses to identity management

7.9.1. Individual Friends

Friends responded in different ways to how IYM managed the tensions resulting from the complex identity of the Society. For example, some Friends bypassed the practice of testing concerns at different levels of the Society, which in any case had been adapted to avoid bringing certain 'Troubles'-related matters to the Yearly Meeting. An example is Victor Bewley, whose role as an intermediary was outlined in chapter six. According to Rachel Bewley-Bateman, if Victor Bewley had followed the usual procedure for testing his concern it would have exposed the strong feelings of some Friends that contact with 'the men of violence' was not in accord with the peace testimony, and would have delayed his response to requests to help facilitate communication between members of the IRA and the British Government. Bewley therefore acted on a more individual basis with the support of local Friends and not on behalf of Quakers nationally.

Some respondents recognised that a schism in the Yearly Meeting has been avoided, but observed that this has been at some cost and there were Friends who were critical of the lack of 'positioning' (Quaker 'neutrality') of IYM during the 'Troubles' which was explored in chapter six. Other respondents expressed the view that there was a possible 'sectarian' bias evident in how the peace testimony was interpreted on occasions, referring to the 'lack of unity' about an application for membership from an attender who was a member of Sinn Féin. This is an example of

something that several respondents mentioned with regard to feeling 'silenced' by the convention in the Society at the time of not highlighting political divisions.

7.9.2. Corporate level

This section considers some of the challenges that Irish Quakerism faces to maintain the unity that has been achieved so far. It can be argued that unity based on relationships can be harder to maintain and more difficult than unity based on doctrine or ideology. Relational unity relies more heavily on the Quaker business method and discernment, the roles of key individuals, and events that encourage social bonding. In addition, it can be contended that IYM has a strong corporate identity in the sense that it encompasses a wide range of diversity in its membership. However, that doctrinal unity in the Society is weaker because of this diversity. When unity is sought to make progress on contentious issues brought to the Yearly Meeting, the differences between Friends' views and backgrounds are highlighted and this can undermine their sense of relational unity. For example, it could be argued that the decision to devolve decisions about MfW for civil partnerships to the PMs weakens national unity; building in a mechanism which accentuates regional and theological differences creates a form of inequality at a local level, although the Yearly Meeting stays together. Unity is also likely to be more difficult to maintain in PMs which have a greater mix of identities than those that are mainly liberal or evangelical in tone.

There is already some splintering occurring at the local level as some PMs become semi-detached from the national organisation, as discussed in chapter six. Some respondents commented that a large evangelical PM is becoming more

congregational, for example, with the publication of doctrinal statements on their website about homosexuality and civil partnerships. A liberal PM in the same QM also publicised their very different position on the same issue (these statements are included in chapter six). The different positions about this ongoing social issue seems to raise questions about how a clear message about what Irish Quakerism stands for is formulated by the Society.

7.10. Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the principal research findings from my study. It began with a summary of the main themes from the background chapters which set out the historical context of the development of sectarianism in Ireland and the position of Quakers. I suggested that IYM is politically and theologically diverse, and has prioritised relational unity in response to conflict between different traditions within the Society. I contended that IYM developed a way of managing the complex identity of the Society, through its structure, the role of key individuals and considered use of the Quaker business method when contentious issues arose. I gave examples of the consequences of this model of identity management for individual Friends and the Society as a whole.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1. Introduction

In the final chapter of this thesis I consider alternative interpretations in relation to my findings about the unity of IYM (8.2). I then go on to explore what the model of identity management outlined in the previous chapter has to offer in other situations of identity related conflict (8.3). I conclude this thesis by setting out some of the implications of my findings for current scholarship and future research (8.4).

8.2. Alternative interpretations of findings

There are a number of other possible explanations for my findings about the prioritisation of unity by IYM which are explored in the next two sections.

8.2.1. Unity is a result of inertia

It could be argued that Friends in Ireland have stayed together, although they have very different identities, because they do not have the motivation or energy to separate and form new Quaker communities like Indiana Yearly Meeting⁹⁷ (which like IYM has a small membership) did in 2013.⁹⁸ This may be related to the small numbers of Friends that are active in Ireland and demographic factors like age.

It is possible to draw parallels between IYM and Indiana Yearly Meeting in terms of how similar political and social issues posed challenges to the unity of these groups. In the case of Indiana Yearly Meeting there were tensions about the Vietnam War in the late 1960s to mid-1970s which severely tested the unity of the Yearly Meeting.

⁹⁷ Indiana Yearly Meeting and the New Association of Friends (which is the newly formed grouping) are part of Friends United Meeting in North America (Angell, 2014).

⁹⁸ According to Stephen Angell, after reconfiguration the membership of Indiana Meeting was reduced by a third to just under 2000 active members (2014).

According to Stephen Angell, many members of the Meeting were open in their support of the war and conscientious objectors were in a minority which created conflict with those who were strongly opposed to the war (Angell 2013). The reasons for the recent schism appear to be mainly related to attitudes about homosexuality and authority. According to Angell, a survey of members' views revealed that:

The new Indiana Yearly Meeting's Friends see Biblical authority and homosexuality at the root of the separation... while New Association Friends, whose organization incorporates meetings that span a liberal-conservative spectrum, saw the chief issue in the separation to be how the yearly meeting leadership exercised its authority (*Quaker Theology*, 2014).

The reasons why one Yearly Meeting stayed together while another separated are varied and complex. It appears that Indiana Yearly Meeting may have prioritised doctrine and authority over relational unity. In Ireland because relationships were prioritised over doctrine, it was regarded as necessary for the sake of unity to devolve certain decisions about contentious issues to the local level. My research findings suggest that there has been a conscious choice to maintain the unity of the Yearly Meeting but inertia about radical change may have played a part. There was a different approach to managing the conflict within Indiana Yearly Meeting where the separation was experienced by some Friends as unpleasant but by the majority as a necessary consequence of irresolvable differences (Angell, 2014).

8.2.2. Ireland Yearly Meeting and the 'behavioural creed'

Dandelion's observation about diversity of belief being covered up by silence and therefore open conflict avoided (not always successfully) is now compared with the culture of Quakerism in Ireland. Liberal Quakerism's approach to uncertainty with openness to new light and rejection of theological truths, what Dandelion refers to as

the 'absolute perhaps' (2008a, 34-35), has proved to be a difficult match with the more prescriptive theology of evangelical Friends in Ireland.

In terms of the extent to which the 'behavioural creed' operates within Irish Quakerism, my findings suggest that although IYM fits within the liberal tradition, of unprogrammed meetings grounded in silence, in practice there is variation in the content of Meetings for Worship according to the theological outlook of the PM. This has resulted in a blurring of the boundary between behaviour/form and content of Quaker worship. It was very evident to me whether the Meetings for Worship that I attended fell within the liberal or evangelical tradition. For example, during MfW at an evangelical PM there was a lot of fairly long ministry and all of it referred to passages from the Bible (field notes 2011). This impression of evangelical Meetings is confirmed by a number of respondents, for example, one said that:

The Grange Friends are always regarded as being the back of beyond because they're highly Bible-centred as they are known to have a bunker mentality, but I went up there with somebody else for their 350th [anniversary]...and they had a praise session in the afternoon where you could stand up and ask for what hymn you wanted to sing and everyone would belt it out and it was very good.

At the liberal Meetings I attended there were less vocal contributions than at evangelical ones and Friends who spoke mainly used non-theistic language. There was marked discomfort expressed by some respondents at one predominantly liberal Meeting when a small number of evangelical Friends ministered in a way that was thought to be 'programmed' (field notes 2011). The impression of the diverse belief content of Quaker worship is confirmed by Ross Chapman, who observed that:

Within Ireland, Friends Meetings have a wide range of expression and ministry. Some emphasize current social, political and international topics, others maintain scripture as the prime inspiration, with personal devotion, vocal prayer and hymn-singing evident...(2013, 17).

It can be argued that there are some differences in the 'behavioural creed' within IYM shaped by the theological outlook of liberal and evangelical Meetings and different forms of worship. This emphasises the different theological traditions of Friends and therefore local and regional differences are highlighted, so that in terms of supporting the unity of the Society the 'behavioural creed' is less effective than Dandelion purports it to be amongst British Quakers.

Another way of seeing evangelical forms of Quaker worship in Ireland relates to what Simon Best calls the 'culture of contribution' which he observed in British adolescent Quakerism. It can be argued that there is a closer match between evangelical Meetings in Ireland and the programmed and semi-programmed worship of British adolescent Quakers, where a variety of contributions in the form of spoken ministry, music and other activities are valued (2010, 172). Best suggests that there is not the same value placed on silence amongst adolescent Quakers compared to adult Quakers in BYM, where silence plays a part in reducing negative reactions to Friends' different beliefs (2010, 173). It can be argued therefore, that a 'culture of contribution' operates in the evangelical Meetings in Ireland but this could produce tensions between Friends in Meetings that contain both liberal and evangelical traditions.

8.3. Application beyond Ireland Yearly Meeting

In this section I discuss how some aspects of the Quaker model of identity management could work for other groups and communities experiencing conflict. For example, it can be argued that Quaker approaches to identity management can be

seen as a 'third way' between sectarian identity categories. As one respondent asserted about the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland:

Well it sees itself as an attempt to build a bridge in the direction of a consistent, national shared culture that is inclusive of all religious sects... in a sense it's a demonstration of the potential for the future in Ireland as a whole if we were turn our mind to propagating it.

I begin by looking at this subject in relation to national identity and how what is termed meta or supranational-identity is considered in the literature. The extent to which the category Irish could be viewed as a meta-identity is an obvious place to start. I contend that this identity is problematic for a number of people on the island of Ireland. There is the political reality of two Irish states which have been in existence since 1922 and developed distinctive socio-political structures after partition, illustrated in table 5.1 (chapter five). Only some people, including Quakers, claim Irish as their identity and the majority live in the Republic of Ireland. In Northern Ireland there are a wide range of national identities to choose from and only one respondent referred to having dual Irish and British nationality. Other identity labels such as republican, nationalist or Catholic can be viewed as staking a claim to Irishness. This can result in, as a number of respondents pointed out, a sense of not being fully accepted as Irish if they do not fit one of these identity categories. Attitudes to Irishness can also take the form of self-exclusion. As James McAuley and Jonathan Tonge point out, there is a narrative within Unionism in Northern Ireland which views any relationship to Irishness in oppositional terms and rejects what is considered to be its politicised meaning (2010, 275-276). In addition, there is the issue of eligibility for Irish citizenship in the Republic of Ireland and some people are legally excluded from gaining citizenship. For example, in 2004 the 27th amendment to the Irish

constitution was passed, which restricted eligibility for citizenship to children born in the country to those with at least one Irish parent (McAuley and Tonge 2010, 277).

Beyond Ireland, the subject of European identity as a possible supranational-identity is discussed by Neil Fligstein, Alina Polyakova and Wayne Sandholtz (2012). They examine the extent to which membership of the European Union (EU) has generated a greater concept of European identity compared to national identity amongst EU citizens. Fligstein, Polyakova and Sandholtz assert that the relevant factors that influence identity choices are related to social class, occupation, education, age and exposure to other European cultures. For example, people with higher incomes who enjoy travel, cultural activities and interaction with other Europeans tend to identify more with the EU. Blue-collar workers, older people and those with nationalistic views, are less likely to regard themselves as European (2012, 109-110).

Jonathan White points to another factor which influences identification with the EU which is geographical location. He quotes a 2001 report into perceptions of the EU which shows that there is a north-south divide in how strongly an attachment is felt with people in Central Europe and the Mediterranean countries, for historical reasons, having a stronger sense of shared culture and values (2003, 42). There is also the tendency for people to define themselves against others that is highlighted by Sue Grundy and Lynn Jamieson who, in their study of the orientation of young people aged 16-24 towards 'Citizenship and European Identity' (2005,1), found that, for example:

...some interviewees reported first feeling European when in the USA where they were also sometimes labelled as different from 'Americans'. Some respondents from Edinburgh became more adamantly Scottish rather than British when faced with American confusion between England and Britain (2005, 3).

Surveys appear to confirm that the people who say they have a European identity are in the minority. Fligstein analysed Eurobarometer data from 2004 which showed that only 12.7 percent of people identified as European. Another finding from the data suggests that:

An additional 43.3 per cent of people viewed themselves as having a national identity and sometimes a European identity. These people who sometimes view themselves as Europeans can be viewed as 'situational Europeans' – that is, under the right conditions they will place a European identity over a national identity (Fligstein, Polyakova and Sandholtz 2012, 110).

According to Fligstein, Polyakova and Sandholtz, although the majority of people in Europe identify themselves primarily in terms of their national identity, it is possible to argue that, if certain political issues encourage a closer identification with being European, '54 per cent of people will support a European solution to the problem' (2012, 110).

Fligstein, Polyakova and Sandholtz discuss a significant trend in terms of national identity which appears to indicate a rise in nationalistic-oriented politics linked to the emergence of right-wing parties in the last 20 years. These radical groupings stress that ethnicity is an integral component of national identity and their policies are anti-immigration in tone (2012, 114). Fligstein, Polyakova and Sandholtz assert that the portrayal of immigration as a threat to economic and social stability by the radical right appeals to those people who feel they have not gained from the cultural and economic benefits of the European project. As the authors contend:

...they celebrate their national ethnic uniqueness and invoke the Christian and historical heritage of European citizens as a way to justify the exclusion of outsider groups (2012, 114).

It can be concluded then that European as a meta-identity only works consistently for a minority of EU citizens. It is also an identity that is largely situational and related to

geographical location, attitudes towards specific EU-related issues, and other factors such as social class, occupation and so on.

I now consider the extent to which Britishness can be considered as a meta-identity.

David McCrone examines the complex subject of national identity in the United Kingdom and argues that:

While the state has existed since the early 18th century, not until 1948 were its people classed as 'citizens'. Instead, there was a sense of imperial identity – *civis Britannicussum* – which covered at least white members of the Empire and latterly the Commonwealth as 'subjects' of the Crown (2002, 302).

While some people in the UK embraced the imperial project and its perceived benefits, others because of their political perspectives, including anti-imperialism, continue to find the category 'British' more problematic. Multiculturalism linked to the settlement of people from former colonial countries in the UK impacts on how nationality and ethnicity are framed. McCrone discusses the way in which national identity and ethnicity appear to be regarded as two separate concepts. Ethnicity is commonly linked to race and is about 'difference' and skin colour, or in other words 'ethnic minorities'. Occasionally Irishness is seen as including both categories as 'national' and 'ethnic' (2002, 303). As McCrone goes on to assert:

In other words, 'ethnics' are defined as 'not us', but those who are different and frequently seen as socially and culturally inferior. In short, the vocabulary and rhetoric of 'ethnicity' belong almost exclusively to the framework of 'multiculturalism' (2002, 303).

In addition, according to McCrone, although 'Britishness' technically refers to an overarching state identity, English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish (a more 'loaded' identity, as explored in the thesis) are national identities; the relationships between state and national identities are complex and, particularly in the case of 'Britishness' and 'Englishness', are often confused (2002, 304). As McCrone asserts

in his discussion of the complex factors that impact on national identity, including identification with region, culture and ethnicity:

...one device for inclusion is to play the 'British' card which in legal terms confers citizenship on all the peoples of the UK. The problem with this solution is that it owes far more to constitutional law than it does to sociology (2002, 309).

And as Rebecca Langlands argues:

Britishness should be approached as an allegiance that is held in addition to – rather than instead of – the often intense ethnic loyalties of the state's inhabitants. This signals that there is not (and never has been) one single variant of Britishness (1999, 64).

McCrone contrasts notions of citizenship in the UK with France, and refers to the controversy about the ban on wearing the hijab in state schools which he contends is an example of the dominance of political secularism in France (2002, 315). He asserts that:

One has to behave in a 'French' way to be taken as French. There is perhaps a centrifugal quality to French national identity that makes hybridity (*métissage*) more problematic compared with the more centripetal tendencies in the UK, with its multinationality and its fuzzy residues of Britishness... Although France has a much more robust civic tradition of citizenship that covers all who live on French 'territory' (even if that is not in France), cultural forms that do not sit comfortably with the civic republican tradition become problematic (McCrone 2002, 315).

Issues related to unity, citizenship and religion in France were highlighted in January 2015, when a number of people were killed at the offices of 'Charlie Hebdo', a satirical magazine, and at a kosher supermarket in Paris. Shortly after the attacks Paddy O'Connell presented a programme on Radio 4 about secularism in France, and how to promote unity when there is a sense of polarisation in the country and many French Muslims feel alienated from society. One contributor, Tariq Modood,⁹⁹ pointed out that the form of secularisation that is particularly problematic for Muslims

⁹⁹ Modood is Director of the University of Bristol Research Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship.

is related to bans and prohibitions on clothing and religious symbols which appear to mainly impact on them. Modood argues that not all overt forms of religious expression are curtailed in the public sphere and Catholicism is privileged in France. He asserts that the way forward in creating a greater sense of unity is to have a form of pluralist secularisation that is supportive of religion. The issue of freedom of speech as an overriding principle of the French Republic which must be protected at all cost was discussed, although as Modood asserted there is censorship of certain subjects, for example, holocaust denial is illegal ('Broadcasting House' 2015).

It can be argued that freedom of speech as a stand-alone principle or right, divorced from responsibility, impacts on people with particular sensibilities about issues such as representations of the Prophet Muhammad in cartoons. There is no law which gives people the right not to be offended; however, in terms of building bridges between communities, publishing images that give offence to some is not conducive to creating unity in French society.

To summarise, Irish, British and French, like European, only work for some as a meta-identity. These meta-identities are situational and not stable for the reasons outlined above. I found that 'Quaker' has the potential to work as a meta-identity, particularly on an external, political level rather than an internal theological one. This is demonstrated by how some Friends have consciously developed a Quaker identity that is neither Catholic nor Protestant to sidestep negative sectarian connotations. This stance was validated when the planning of the Quaker House project was in its early stages. Members of other Christian denominations perceived that Friends were ideally placed to take the work forward, as this quote illustrates:

...one of the reasons behind the evolution of Quaker House was the fact that at the time in the '70s, late '70s, when this was being thought about, there was definite encouragement from the other Churches to do this because they felt Quakers were in a place in the middle. They weren't perceived as either Protestant or Catholic and therefore they were the people who could actually be in this position and do something in this sort of political area.

The label 'Quaker' was claimed by these Friends as being a third way – encompassing their own potentially 'oppositional' identity categories. This meant, for example, that perceptions of Quaker neutrality and their anti-sectarian stance gave Friends involved in 'Troubles'-related work a strong basis in terms of establishing credibility and trustworthiness with the nationalist and unionist communities during the conflict. It can be argued that by modelling an alternative, non-sectarian identity, Friends are building capacity for transformation in both of the Irish states in terms of developing more fluid, less oppositional personal and communal identities.

8.4. Academic Consequences

The next two sections consider some of the implications of this study.

8.4.1. Implications for existing scholarship

There has been no detailed sociological examination of Quakers and sectarianism in Ireland and the impact this has had on individuals and IYM. This highlights a significant gap in Quaker Studies. Although small-scale in nature, the research contributes a rich and in-depth picture of the experiences and perceptions of Irish Quakers as they reflected on what was important to them about their identities. The study also adds to the literature about the promotion of unity and conflict management by Irish Quakerism which has a complex corporate identity.

This study fills a gap in Irish history about the positioning of Quakers in response to

sectarianism and Irish Nationalism which until now has been limited to studies about a small number of individual Friends. In relation to identity studies, my work adds significant insights to the research about identity and sectarianism in Ireland. This study shows that Friends sought to negotiate and at times transcend sectarian attitudes and behaviour and how this was possible given the social and political context of the two Irish states. Quakers continue to give practical expression to their theology of 'faith in action' through cross-community projects, thereby aiming to contribute to a more inclusive and just society in Northern Ireland.

8.4.2. Future research agenda

Many groups struggle with how to promote unity when there is conflict about contentious issues, for example, the Church of England's management of the very different perspectives relating to homosexuality within the worldwide Anglican community. There have been tensions about similar issues within Quakerism which are more diffuse but are highlighted when Friends meet for regional and international gatherings. Throughout this thesis I have referred to the contribution of studies about Quaker unity and conflict management undertaken by Best, Dandelion, Kline, Plüss and Robson. I have raised a number of new insights about the distinctive approach of Irish Quakers which I argue could have application to other groups and should be considered in future work about these subjects.

It appears that the identity category of 'Quaker' can subsume other national, cultural and theological identities that in certain situations prove to be divisive. These findings are significant because they point to a third way between sectarian divisions that has not been considered so far in the literature. This raises the issue of how an

understanding of identity formation and the way that some individuals are able to transcend the limitations of their social identity could be employed to examine communal sectarian identity. Such research could contribute to a better understanding of approaches to unity and conflict reduction in regions where there is entrenched sectarianism. Furthermore, I point to the necessity of continued research to identify what helps to erode the pre-conditions to sectarianism and oppositional identities in regions of conflict such as Northern Ireland. Finally, it has been a frustration rather than a weakness of this study that I was unable to bring in more insights from disciplines such as psychology to have a psycho-social and perhaps more holistic approach to the study of identity, for example, with research about the impact of trauma experienced within groups on collective identity.

8.5. Chapter summary

In the final chapter of this thesis I discussed two alternative explanations for my finding about the unity of IYM, I explored the possibility that 'Quaker' could work as a meta-identity in different situations. I suggested that although this was problematic within the Society, externally the category 'Quaker' has application as a meta-label. I went on to outline the implications of this research study for Quaker Studies, Irish Studies and work about sectarianism and identity. Given the intensity of identity-related conflict in the world I conclude this thesis by pointing to the crucial need for future research about this subject.

Appendix 1

Interview Guide

Clarify interview agreement by going through the participants' letter and consent form together. Opening questions (ask them to assume I have no prior knowledge of IYM):

- What Meeting are you attached to?
- For how long?
- Tell me about how you come to be a Friend.

Follow up prompts

- Tell me about your current involvement with Quakers

Follow up prompts

- Ask them to describe Quakerism in Ireland e.g. culturally, politically and theologically - starting locally and then across the Yearly Meeting.
- Ask about experiences of meeting Friends from different traditions.
- What's it like having such diversity within the YM?

Follow up prompts

- When appropriate start exploring how the respondent views their own background and identity.

Follow up prompts

- Ask about perspectives/experiences of the 'Troubles' and sectarianism.
- Ask about how sectarianism operates in their part of Ireland.

Follow up prompts

- Where does Quakerism fit within the Catholic/Protestant divide?
- How do you think YM has held together?

Follow up prompts

Debriefing – ask interviewee about the experience, share my impressions if appropriate, anything else the person would like to say or ask about.

Appendix 2

Transcription Guidelines

Research aims - for the transcriber

My research study investigates the impact of sectarianism in Ireland on the identity of respondents. I will be exploring the respondents' processes, viewpoints, experiences and emotions. In addition to recording what is said by the interviewer and respondent, it is important that indicators of emotion and reflection are recorded in the transcripts.

Notation system

Speaker's name will be in bold with a short space before the text begins.

MK:

Respondent Code:

Record the time above the respondent code each time they answer a question

Leave in the 'ums' and 'ers' etc and I will decide if they are significant.

Full stops should be used to indicate natural pauses.

Longer pauses should be indicated by [pause].

Laughter, change in pitch and other obvious indicators of intonation and emotion can be shown by underscoring in bold e.g. **laughs**

It is only necessary to record events such as the telephone ringing or someone entering or leaving the room if there is a marked change in the conversation in which case mark in bold e.g. **phone rings**

Transcribe what you hear – do not correct grammar or omit slang

To indicate parts of the recording that you cannot understand, use square brackets e.g. [unintelligible] and include the exact point in the recording where this occurs e.g. [unintelligible 22:01]. I will try and work out what the unintelligible word is

If in doubt about the name of an organisation etc. put in what you hear rather than use acronyms

Transcription layout

Margin - 1 inch left, 2 inches right

Page numbers - middle bottom of the page

Ariel 12pt

Common Acronyms

CfND – Centre for Neighbourhood Development
CRC – Community Relations Council
DUP – Democratic Unionist Party
EMU – Education for Mutual Understanding
FSC – Friends Service Council
FWCC – Friends World Committee for Consultation
GFA – Good Friday Agreement
IQFA - Irish Quaker Faith in Action
IRA – Irish Republican Army
IYFC – Irish Young Friends Committee
IYM - Ireland Yearly Meeting
JYM – Junior Yearly Meeting
MM – Monthly Meeting
NICRA – Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
NIO – Northern Ireland Office
PM – Preparative Meeting
PP – Peace People
PRG – Peace and Reconciliation Group (Derry)
PSNI – Police Service of Northern Ireland
QHB – Quaker House Belfast
QM - Quarterly Meeting
QPEP – Quaker Peace Education Project
QS – Quaker Service
QVS – Quaker Voluntary Service
SDLP – Social Democratic Labour Party
SF – Sinn Féin
UQM – Ulster Quarterly Meeting
UQPC – Ulster Quaker Peace Committee

I will update this list as other terms come up during the interviews.

Data Storage and Confidentiality

The transcriber should delete transcripts and recordings after the transcripts have been sent to the researcher and acknowledged.

Appendix 3

Extracts from Research Journal 2011-2013

It's been a very interesting, thought-provoking and enriching time here. I feel that this theme of identity and sectarianism and moving forward together with divergence is really important and I feel glad I'm in that stream that that's what I'm investigating. It feels the absolutely right place to be and if I can just manage to keep being aware of my role here and be sensitive in myself and follow the principles of IYM. I'm not always going to get it right and the more I come here and the more I see people the more some of the issues are like a hook, touch me and the harder it is to - well I'm not really detached am I? I'm in and out of different states but that's what I'm doing.

I think maybe I do need to hold back. It's hard because I'm beginning to see certain people as friends in the same way as I see Friends in my Local Meeting. But I can talk to other people (in my own circle) and by holding my feelings back I think it's kept me less vulnerable.

I was asked directly by an Irish Friend what I thought about the decision. I shared my views because at that moment I wanted to respond honestly to a direct question – as a participant rather than as a researcher. The next day I had a conversation with another Friend which reminded me of the difficulties of wearing different hats here – being a researcher and also being interested in the subjects under discussion, some of them for personal reasons. The person who had asked me what I thought yesterday had obviously been sharing my views with the Friend I spoke to today. She wanted to put her perspective and first of all I felt 'Oh dear I've stepped in when I should stay out of it, but then I had been asked my opinion and being honest I wanted to say what I felt'. I am aware that the more that I go to Ireland the harder it is not to be drawn in by Friends to 'sectarian' issues or to maintain 'neutrality' about what is shared with me.

After one interview was over we continued to talk and I shared some of my perspectives on Quaker evangelical theology, for example, the problem for some liberal Friends that maybe that they're reacting against the authoritarian nature of the faith they were brought up in. They find it difficult to accept the messages that were delivered in childhood of punishment and fear (these had been my own experiences of authoritarian Catholic teachings). The interview left me questioning what my beliefs are and if can I call myself a real Quaker?

I have just finished transcribing several interviews from last year. Listening to the interview with one respondent brought back many of the emotions I felt at the time. He had shared things with me that he had not shared with other people in his Meeting, I identified with some of the experiences he had about struggling to belong, to feel an insider within his Quaker community.

Appendix 4

Extract from University of Birmingham Application for Ethical Review

Risk Assessment and Management Plan

1. RISKS

a) Outline any potential risks to **INDIVIDUALS**, including research staff, research participants, other individuals not involved in the research and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap

There are three potential risks to individuals:

1. It is possible that participants could be critical of others active in Quaker projects during the 'Troubles'. If this happens there could be a risk to the reputation of those people.
2. There is a slight risk to participants' safety, particularly those that are still living in Northern Ireland. This is because although the 'Troubles' are over there are still sectarian tensions.
3. There is a substantial risk of third party disclosure.

My approach to risk management is based on the consequential ethic in terms of the use of the data. Many of the Quakers that I will be interviewing are very experienced in working in conflict situations and have clear boundaries. I would seek their advice in minimising risk to them and others.

The risk assessment measures that I will put in place are to flag up the potential risks before the interview starts and ask if the participant has any other concerns. I will be aware if anything sensitive is about to be disclosed and stop the recording and check whether the person wants to continue. I will also be very careful to keep interview data confidential during the research and not share information with other participants. Although I can predict no risk to myself, I will let someone know about my arrangements for the interviews and contact them after to confirm that I am safe.

Some of the people that I am going to interview are no longer active in Northern Ireland and live elsewhere. This would appear to reduce any risk of harm to them. The focus of my research is to explore with participants why they became active in Quaker projects in Northern Ireland rather than what they did and who they were involved with. Even if sensitive information was disclosed about others I would focus on their experience and remove or generalise references to third parties. Publication of my completed thesis would be contingent on a review of the risks

b) Outline any potential risks to **THE ENVIRONMENT and/or SOCIETY** and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap.

None that can be predicted.

Appendix 5

Participant Information Letter

Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies
Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, a centre of the University of Birmingham
1046 Bristol Road
Birmingham B29 6LJ

28 August 2012

Irish Quakers: identity and sectarianism

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, I am going to explain why the research is being done and what your participation will involve.

I am a PhD student registered at the University of Birmingham, based at the Centre for Postgraduate Studies at Woodbrooke. I am interested in how the Catholic and Protestant sectarianism affected the lives of Quakers in Ireland. I am currently looking at the extent to which Quakerism offers a third way or an alternative position between communal religious and political differences. My main research method is interviews.

The research will introduce new scholarship about the specific role of Quakers in Ireland and how they approached conflict situations, particularly during the Troubles. This research will also be of interest to Quaker academics and peace workers in other conflict zones.

What I'm asking you to do is to be interviewed at a mutually convenient time and place. It would be very helpful for me to record our meeting to transcribe at a later time. You have the choice of being identified or not. This option is covered in the consent form.

I will send you the relevant section of the thesis should extracts from your interview be included. I will correct any factual inaccuracies that you notice but I will not change material that is based on my interpretation of the interview.

I will separate your details and information about the practical arrangements for the interviews and keep the folders in a locked filing cabinet. I will keep the audio CDs and interview transcriptions secure. I will give your interview recording a code so that if someone else does some of the transcriptions they will not know your identity. I will keep the data during the period of my research and when the thesis is published will send the anonymised data to Friends House library in London.

If you are willing to participate in the research please sign and date the consent form and return it to me when we meet for the interview. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you would like any more information or to discuss the research my contact details are as follows: Maria Kennedy, telephone: or email: You can also contact my supervisor - who is Professor Ben Pink Dandelion, Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies, 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LJ.

Thank you for reading this letter.

Maria Kennedy

Appendix 6

Consent Form

Consent Form for Doctoral Research Study – Quakers in Ireland, identity and sectarianism

Please tick the appropriate boxes

I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 28/08/2012. ☐

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. ☐

I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and recorded. ☐

Select only one of the next two options:

I would like my name used where what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised. ☐

I do not want my name used in this project. ☐

I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project. ☐

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. ☐

I agree for the data I provided to be archived anonymously at Friends House, London ☐

I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of that data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form. ☐

I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs according to the terms I have specified in this form. ☐

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Maria Kennedy. ☐

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
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Researcher	Signature	Date
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Appendix 7

Extract from South Belfast Preparative Meeting Quaker Weddings & Civil Partnerships Leaflet*

What procedures take place before a Quaker Wedding or Celebration of a Civil Partnership?

Quaker marriage procedures were approved in Government legislation over 150 years ago. The ability to legally solemnise marriages according to our long-established religious usages is a privilege which Quakers value highly. We have our own Registering Officer whose responsibility it is to see that all is done correctly in relation to legal marriage regulations. In addition to marriages, in 2012 Ireland Yearly Meeting made the decision to permit its Preparative Meetings to hold Meeting for Worship for the Celebration of Civil Partnerships.

The Celebration of a Marriage or a Civil Partnership takes place in the manner of Friends and is a religious ceremony, open to all and often attended by regular worshippers. It requires that the couple be either members of the Religious Society of Friends or attenders that have shown their understanding of, and commitment to, the religious practices of the Society.

Following a request to hold a Marriage or Meeting for Worship to Celebrate a Civil Partnership, members of the Ministry and Oversight [group] will meet with the couple as far ahead of the proposed date as possible. It is important that the couple fully understands the spiritual significance of the commitment within the Meeting for Worship. As a result of these conversations it may be felt appropriate to arrange further meetings in preparation for the Marriage or Civil Partnership (South Belfast Quakers).

*Adapted from an interview with Gillian Armstrong (previously Clerk of Ministry & Oversight Ireland) from <http://www.mrs2be.ie/quaker-weddings-ireland>

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