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Searching for Connections Between Domestic Violence and Social Conflict in Northern Ireland

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SEARCHING FOR CONNECTIONS BETWEEN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

By

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Overview of Conflict Theories

Introduction

This IPA explores the connection between domestic violence and social conflict in Northern Ireland. Specifically, it will review selected literature on domestic violence and examine social and cultural attitudes regarding violence in Northern Ireland. It will then analyze whether and how occurrences of domestic violence in Northern Ireland are affected by broader social conflict.

This analysis will begin with an overview of conflict theories that will be used to show depth of understanding in the conflict discipline and to determine a specific direction for the problem analysis. This will be followed by an exploration of factors that combine to explain this phenomenon, including an outline of theoretical perspectives used to explain how domestic violence within conflictual societies can be seen and interpreted differently depending on which set of lenses or theories one uses to view the occurrence.

Specific emphasis will be placed on James Tedeschi's *Social Interactionist Theory* (SIT) as an example of one perspective that may offer insight into domestic violence and social conflict in Northern Ireland. SIT is an aggression theory that will be applied to explain similarities between violence in society and violence in the home. The conclusion will provide some suggestions for approaching domestic violence in divided societies. It will also include an anecdotal section on observations regarding conflict in Northern Ireland and suggestions for future research.

Personal Interest

During the initial stages of this project, when choosing a topic, finding resources, and formulating a research question, I became accustomed to peculiar looks and an occasional chuckle. People I spoke with were confused and a bit intrigued why a young man would choose to focus an IPA on an issue that affects predominantly women. Even to me it wasn't clear how a student with an interest in international issues and social conflict chose an IPA topic based on domestic violence, a phenomenon that affects approximately 2% of males (European Campaign on Domestic Violence, 2000). As I peeled back the emotional layers of this issue and began exploring how it had affected me, the path in my mind began to clear.

I was raised in a loving family that was slightly more exposed to sibling brawls and a little more predisposed to conflict than the average family. A graduate course on Human Resources management also contributed to my interest in this subject. During a research assignment I found a 1987 study by the New York Victim Services Agency, that said 75% of women in domestic violence relationships reported being harassed by their abuser at work by telephone or in person (Cadorette et al., 1995). Also shocking was that according the National Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 15 murders occur each week in the workplace and while only one in five deaths is a female, 42% of violence involving women results in homicide (Coco, Jr. 1995). And according to the U.S. Justice Department, boyfriends and husbands, current and former, commit more than 13,000 acts of violence against women in the workplace every year (Anfuso, 1995). I was shocked by the predominance of domestic violence that carried over into social settings and began

exploring this issue in greater depth. This IPA gave me an opportunity to study further this pervasive social issue and allowed me to explore and try to understand the causes of spousal violence.

I began wondering about levels of domestic violence throughout society and which variables (i.e., class distinction, education level, financial disposition, psychological health, etc.) contribute to its occurrence. I thought if domestic violence was this pervasive in the United States where society is relatively non-aggressive or at least not engulfed in war, perhaps it feeds off other forms of conflict and is heightened during times of social tension. This assumption led me to focus on domestic violence in Northern Ireland amidst the ongoing social conflict, and to try to determine whether broader social conflict indeed affects domestic violence.

Overview of Conflict Theories

This section introduces a number of conflict theories that are used to understand causal factors for human conflict and the impetus for aggressive behavior. The format of this section will consist of an outline of various theories through which conflict can be viewed, followed by an analysis of how a particular theory may or may not be helpful in understanding social conflict and domestic violence in the context of Northern Ireland. Each conflict theory will include a discussion on why it was adopted or disregarded as the theoretical basis for this IPA.

According to Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell (1998) a theory is an unsubstantiated hypothesis concerning reality that is not yet definitively known to be true. In fact, there

is an ongoing debate in the academic community as to whether theories are ever true or false. Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell (p. 10) suggest that theories are not true or false as they are conventional choices people make to attribute meaning to actions. Thus, theories can only be useful or not useful.

A conflict theory is a hypothesis that is based on one's assumptions of some aspect of humans in conflict. Theories are also used to make sense of overwhelming amounts of data by determining which data are significant and helpful and which data need not be considered when developing conclusions. In its ideal form, a theory should contain, (a) a cluster of relevant and systematically related assumptions, and (b) a set of empirical definitions (Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, p.10).

According to Pearce & Littlejohn (1997), a worldview is the basis for what most people consider common sense. It is the "subjective certainty" that consists of the things we do not doubt. Put another way, a worldview is a basic set of assumptions about human beings, their interaction, their conflict, their utility, and their relationships based on one's subjective understanding of truth and propriety. Essentially, worldviews are the socially created assumptions humans use to order their lives and the lives of one another in society. Worldviews also reflect a degree of the holder's identity in that they consist of socially constructed manifestations of knowledge, history, reality, and morality. The following theories have been constructed from the subjective worldviews of the respective psychologist or sociologist that created the theory.

It is worth noting that the perspectives and worldviews mentioned here are not the only conflict theories used to understand aggressive behavior. It should also be noted

that worldviews and entire fundamental belief systems exist independent of the theories and worldviews included in this section. In general, people use different factors, influences, and experiences to make judgments about what is relevant and irrelevant given their particular circumstances. These perspectives have been selected based on their ability to address social conflict *and* domestic violence. These have been offered as comparative perspectives to help explain why one theory might fit better than others given its ability to address both social conflict and domestic violence.

Psychodynamic Theories

Psychodynamic theories stem from the psychoanalytic discipline, which was first developed by Sigmund Freud in 1900 and increased in depth and complexity after a series of categorical attitudinal changes by Freud. Subsequent theorists studying and developing further psychodynamic theories are generally contradictions, comparisons, or reactions to Freud's original theories. According to Freud (as cited in Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1998), psychodynamic theories assume that behavior is driven by unconscious, biologically based urges that demand gratification. Freud saw the mind as an iceberg in which the small part above water represents the conscious mind, while the significantly larger portion below water represents the unconscious mind. Within this vast domain of unconsciousness lie urges, passions, repressed ideas, and unseen forces that exercise an imperious control over conscious thoughts and deeds (Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1998).

One of Freud's most popular psychodynamic perspectives consisted of three systems: the id, ego, and superego. Although these three provinces of the personality possess their own characteristics, properties, and functions, they are interdependent and closely interweaved, and all contribute to every facet of personality and human behavior. According to Freud (as cited in Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1998), the *id* consists of everything psychological that is inherited and present at birth, including instincts. It is in close touch with all bodily processes and is responsible for discharging tension and returning the person to a comfortable constant. The *ego* is responsible for distinguishing between the subjective reality of the mind and the objective world of reality. For example, the hungry person needs to seek, find, and eat food before the tension of hunger subsides. The *superego* is the internal representative of the ideal attitudes and values of society rather than the real; it strives for perfection rather than pleasure. Mainly it decides whether something is right or wrong so that it can act according to the moral standards of society. In essence, the superego is the "moral arbiter of conduct" developed in response to rewards and punishments provided by the parents.

Identification Theory. Identification theory represents one of Freud's levels of personality development and is one of two methods by which individuals learn to resolve frustration, anxiety, and conflict. Identification theory is defined as subconsciously adopting the features of another person in an effort to make them a part of one's own personality—thereby, reducing internal tension by modeling behavior that is perceived as ideal. According to Freud (as cited in Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1998), in an effort to

reduce tension, we choose to model those individuals who seem to be more successful in gratifying their needs than we are.

Identification theory could be useful in understanding situations of domestic violence in the following situation: perhaps a husband from an abusive childhood home encounters frustration and anxiety with the changing roles of women in Northern Ireland and the independent attitude of his wife. In an effort to reduce his psychic tension, he not only models the behavior he learned as a child, but adopts the abusive characteristics his father used to reduce frustration, to try to resolve or reduce his own frustration.

Displacement Theory. Displacement theory represents another of Freud's levels of personality development and the second method individuals learn to reduce frustration, anxiety, or conflict. Displacement is defined by Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell (1998) as the capacity of the organism to redirect responses or impulses to a new object when they are denied expression toward their original object. Put simply, displacement is redirecting one's anger or frustration onto someone else because the original person or cause of anger is either unavailable or in a position (professional, physical, etc.) to make a direct display of anger detrimental to oneself.

A consequence of numerous displacements is a pool of dormant tension that acts as a permanent motivating force for behavior. Numerous displacements may erupt in the form of social conflict or domestic violence because the fundamental process of displacement allows for the individualized idea of enemy. According to the theory, if anger or frustration is consistently being displaced onto a new person, one begins to

conceive of the new person as the original object of frustration. This phenomenon allows an actor to displace negative feelings onto a more accessible or vulnerable target. In the context of social conflict or domestic violence, while the new target becomes the source for relieving tension, after a buildup of displacements he/she can also begin to represent the source of the original anger or frustration. If this psychological bridge is constructed in the actor, the new target may also come to represent the actor's enemy. When this occurs, a source's status as "enemy" can justify the use of aggressive behavior or violence as a means of reducing anger or frustration.

Freud (as cited in Moore & Fine, 1995) correlates displacement theory, aggression, and sexuality with the hypothesis that the sexuality of most men contains an element of sadistic aggression and a desire to subjugate using other than the "process of wooing." Ultimately he concluded that aggression is a component of a sexual instinct, that it arises from an instinct for mastery, and that there might be a "cruelty instinct." It is important to note that the person on whom aggression is displaced may also become a suitable reservoir for unwanted features of the actor's sense of self (Volkan, 1994). The rigid line between one's perception of self and other is often referred to as a psychological gap. A psychological gap determines identity because it defines an individual as either with us or not with us. Individuals maintain the psychological gap, consciously or unconsciously, using three psychological tools: (a) *Ritualization*, or the cultural norms, traditions, and family values that are subjective to our group, (b) *Symbols*, or the targets of our externalization, or the symbols we use to determine what is not like

us, and (c) *Narcissism of minor differences*, or the magnification of minor differences that accentuate how "they" are so much different from "us" (Volkan, 1994).

According to Freud (as cited in Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1998), the prototype of all later anxiety is birth trauma. Birth trauma stems from the massive amount of stimuli thrust upon the newborn—stimuli for which it is unprepared and to which it cannot adapt. One of the early tasks of an infant's ego is to start differentiating him/herself from other people, to develop a psychological integument of his own (Volkan, 1994). Anxiety or fear then becomes a conditioned response to feel threatened by those unlike us and define oneself in terms of in-group vs. out-group.

Psychodynamic theories are useful to this analysis insofar as they see aggression as a build-up of tension, frustration, or anxiety within the individual. They do not however, give credibility to the contentions of social learning theories, cognitive/social psychological theories, or social interactionist theory in that one's surrounding environment could positively or negatively influence certain behavior. Psychodynamic theories also dismiss the possibility of an individual consciously realizing degrees of his/her own cognitions, emotions, and motivations for behavior.

Basic Human Needs Theory. John Burton's Basic Human Needs Theory (BHNT) (1993) stems from the sociopolitical perspective that assumes individuals are embodiments of larger social or political categories and one's identity is dependent upon the group to which he/she belongs. Sociopolitical perspectives see conflict as necessary and functional; conflict is something that stabilizes the social or political system.

BHNT is an analytical approach to conflict that says humans possess basic physical and ontological needs and the deprivation of these needs results in the occurrence of conflict. There are conflicts at all societal levels in which ontological needs of identity and recognition, and associated human development needs are frustrated (Burton, 1993). BHNT is a political philosophy that sees areas of conflict as symptoms of larger deeper inability of the social or political structure to meet basic human needs.

Originally, Burton's BHNT was included in the central thesis of this IPA. It was relevant in that it could help explain that in Northern Ireland, as in any society engulfed in social violence, one's safety and ability to avoid conflict is directly dependent on his/her identity as a member of the dominant or subordinate group. The dominant group would frustrate the needs of the subordinate group (just by virtue of being the dominant group) and conflict would result. This conflict would be a symptom of the inability of Northern Ireland's broad social structure to satisfy the needs of its citizens. This seemed a simple enough explanation for what creates social conflict in Northern Ireland.

A search ensued for individual needs that were being frustrated by Northern Ireland's seemingly ineffective social structure that might explain the occurrence of domestic violence. By looking in society for causes of interpersonal conflict, an attempt was made to link domestic violence to social conflict based on what is happening at a broader social level. A basic premise of sociopolitical theory is that conflict is natural and can be positive in stabilizing a system; therefore if it could be shown that social conflict is needed to stabilize the broader social system of Northern Ireland, this link would allow one to maintain that domestic violence is also needed to stabilize the smaller

system of a home in Northern Ireland—thereby making social conflict and domestic violence both natural and necessary. If this parallel could be drawn, Burton's BHNT could be used to explain that conflict is a fundamental *need* of families and societies seeking equilibrium.

However, commentary on how BHNT affected the individual within the system was unable to be located. It seemed akin to seeking an internal explanation for domestic violence by using an external theory of social and political systems. Two basic needs were identified that could have helped bridge the gap between internal and external, but including them would have led to a stretch of BHNT to accommodate a subjective interpretation of it, and would have asked the reader to take a philosophical leap in understanding the sociopolitical worldview. This stretch would have sacrificed both clarity and validity of this IPA. According to this understanding of the inherent limitations of Burton's BHNT, this theory was deemed unhelpful and subsequently disregarded.

Social Learning Theories. Albert Bandura's social learning theories are based on the premise that human beings are capable of thought and self-regulation and just as able to shape and transform their external environments as they are able to be shaped by them. Bandura sees social learning theories as,

> The explanation of human behavior in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental determinants. Within the process of reciprocal determinism lies the opportunity for people to influence their destiny as well as the limits to self-direction. Both people and their environments are reciprocal determinants of each other (Bandera; as cited in Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1998).

Social learning theories see individuals as rational observational beings that are capable of processing the behavior of themselves and others, processing the outcomes of those behaviors, and determining whether or not to proceed with those behaviors in the future. An individual's subsequent hypothesis about the potential for success or failure in future behaviors rests on the accuracy or inaccuracy of his/her initial hypothesis. In other words, individuals perform behaviors based on positive or negative reinforcement and whether that reinforcement has secured desired outcomes or punishing outcomes (Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1998). According to Resick & Reese (1986), social learning theories emphasize the interaction of individual behavior with environmental stimuli and social cues rather than the personal pathology of the abuser. The hypothesis that personal influences, environmental forces, and behavior function interdependently rather than autonomously is called reciprocal determinism (Hall, Lindzey & Campbell, p.600).

According to Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell (1998), Bandura recognizes two distinct types of reinforcement that influence the continuation or cessation of behaviors: (a) *Self reinforcement*, which is when a person compares his/her behavior to internal standards leading to pride or satisfaction for meeting internal standards, or guilt or shame for violating those standards; and (b) *vicarious reinforcement*, which occurs when an individual witnesses someone else's experience reinforcing consequences for a behavior and that individual anticipates similar consequences if he/she produces the same behavior. This crucial distinction in social learning theory recognizes an individual's capability to modify his/her behavior based on direct as well as indirect reinforcement. This suggests that individuals acknowledge the cognitions, feelings, and emotions of

surrounding individuals and have the potential to learn through visualization and anticipation as well as direct experience—a hypothesis uncommon to either psychodynamic or cognitive/social psychological theories.

Observing the behavior of others and using their experiences as a guide for one's own behaviors is called "modeling." According to Hall, Lindzey & Campbell (1998), modeling is governed by four processes: (a) *Attention*, meaning people cannot learn unless they pay attention to and accurately perceive significant features of the to-be-modeled behavior; (b) *Retention*, or using mental images and verbal representations to remember and code behavior; (c) *Production*, or the ability to reproduce observed behavior; (d) *Motivation*, or enacting a learned behavior because it leads to a desired outcome, it has been observed to be effective, or it is self-satisfying.

It should be noted that social interactionist theory, the major theoretical perspective in this IPA, is a derivation of social learning theories. Social learning theories are useful in examining the social environment in Northern Ireland when attempting to understand why domestic violence occurs there. Social learning theory has posited that violence is modeled in the family of origin and leads more to a portrait of an abuser who uses violence to "resolve" conflicts with his victim (Dutton et al., 1996). However, the specific issue that generates violence in society or in the home is not generally addressed. Moreover, social learning theories rely quite heavily on modeled behavior to explain aggressive activity. Although this hypothesis is relevant and certainly helpful, social interactionist theory is slightly more useful in that it expands on

social learning theories to allow for psychological limitations, social influence, and emotional well being in addition to modeled behavior to influence behavior.

Cognitive/Social Psychology Theories. In contrast to psychodynamic theories, Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell (1998) state that cognitive/social psychological theories assume that humans are inherently social beings and are motivated by social urges. Humans "relate themselves to other people, engage in cooperative social activities, acknowledge social welfare and self interest, and acquire a style of life that is predominantly social in orientation" (p.125). Cognitive/social psychological theories purport that social interest is inherent, but the environment into which each person is born determines the types of relationships with people and social structures that develop. "In its ultimate sense, social interest consists of the individual helping society to attain the goal of a perfect society: Social interest is the true compensation for the natural weaknesses of individual human beings" (p.132). According to cognitive/social psychological theories, when individuals acknowledge their limitations they should subordinate their personalized interests and strive to attain the only perfection they are capable of—the perfect social structure.

Psychologist Alfred Adler sees humans as conscious beings that are aware of the reasons for their behavior and conscious of their inferiorities and aspirations. Moreover, he states, humans are self-conscious individuals capable of planning and guiding their actions with full awareness of the meaning for their own self-realization (Hall, Lindzey & Campbell, 1998). In other words, people are rational beings that comprehend the

existence of a surrounding environment and are capable of consciously weighing degrees of benefit to themselves and to others before making choices. A hypothesis that might suggest humans are islands that concede or interfere with one another's aspirations; thereby making conflict the divergence of interests or incompatible aspirations between two individuals within a society.

Mathematical Game Theory. Mathematical game theory is a quantitative way of analyzing the logic of an opponent's choices based on his/her perception of a situation and the outcomes of his/her choices. According to Pearce & Littlejohn (1997), three types of mathematical game theory have been developed, including: Zero-sum games of pure competition, in which whatever one person wins is matched by what another person loses; Non-zero-sum games, in which all players can either win or lose together; Or, mixed-motive games, in which each player is confronted by the risky choice to cooperate or compete. Pearce & Littlejohn (1997) state that in a mixed-motive game, a player can win a lot or lose only a little, or can lose a lot or win only a little, depending on the choice the other player makes, i.e., Prisoner's Dilemma.

Psychologist Alfred Adler considered each person to be a unique configuration of motives, traits, interests, and values, where every action by the person "bears the stamp" of his or her style of life (Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1998). Considering Adler's concept of personality, success or failure of mathematical game theory would depend upon the subjective motives, traits, interests, and values of each player and the ability to correctly anticipate that of one's opponent. Furthermore, Adler suggests in Hall, Lindzey

& Campbell (1998) that the final goal for all human beings is: to be aggressive, to be powerful, and to be superior—A hypothesis that could fit well with the concept of mathematical game theory.

Mathematical game theory is based on a calculated number of assumptions made by an individual about a conflictual situation: (a) game theory is based on the assumption that any situation has a limited number of choices that will ultimately lead to the most favorable outcome for oneself; (b) both parties recognize and are aware of the choices; (c) most favorable outcomes are dependent on our own and the other's choices; (d) all parties recognize and are aware of the value of favorable outcomes to everyone involved; and (e) parties' choices are inherently self-interested and seek the best possible outcome for themselves.

According to Pearce & Littlejohn (1997), in a game, the opponent is essential, and must cooperate if the game is to be played well. The opponents must play by the rules and must do their best to win. The goal is to outwit or outperform the opponent. This sentiment is consistent with Alfred Adler's (as cited in Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1997) realization on the final goal of human beings,

> I began to see clearly in every psychological phenomenon the striving for superiority. It runs parallel to physical growth and is an intrinsic necessity of life itself. It lies at the root of all solutions of life's problems and is manifested in the way in which we met these problems. All our functions follow its direction. They strive for conquest, security, and increase, either in the right or the wrong direction.

Cognitive/social psychological theories could be very useful in explaining social conflict in Northern Ireland as the result of conflictual groups calculating the consequences of engaging in aggressive behavior and doing so in order to achieve

premeditated or anticipated results. However, cognitive/social psychological theories might be less useful in explaining the causes of domestic violence. For these theories to be useful, they would have to explain domestic violence as the result of an individual engaging in spousal abuse to attain certain results. This would also have to assume that domestic violence is premeditated rather than spontaneous—a conclusion that this IPA is unwilling to draw.

Personal Construct Theory. Developed by George Kelly in 1935 after becoming disenchanted with Freudian psychodynamic theories, personal construct theory is based on the hypothesis that different people construe the world in different ways and therefore, act in different ways. None of these alternative constructs is necessarily right or wrong: rather each has different implications (Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1998). Kelly asserts that humans seek to anticipate accurately the consequences of their actions, a pursuit that becomes the hallmark of healthy development—an assumption that relegates behavior to afterthought (p.410). Thus, differences in personality and behavior represent differences in alternative constructions of reality.

Kelly defines a construct as, "a way in which some things are construed as being alike and yet different from others" (Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1998). Furthermore, our basic construction of the world is in terms of dichotomous, either/or alternatives, not in terms of gradations or scales; our fundamental judgment is whether an object is good or bad, not how good or bad it is (p. 418). As it is understood in this context, personal construct theory is based on an assumption of an ability to determine one's behavior and

the acceptance of alternative perspectives. This assumes that at any point in time, our behavior is determined by our personal construct of reality and that it is possible for our construct of reality to change or be consciously discarded in favor of an alternative perspective, ultimately leading to a change in our behavior.

According to Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell (1998), personal construct theory argues that people act as they do not because of forces that act on them or in them, but because of the alternatives they perceive as a function of their construction of the world. Kelly's personal construct theory may be the most dynamic behavior/personality/motive theory encountered in the research thus far. It has evidence of psychodynamic theories in that it addresses the individual and his/her subjective cognitions and emotions; it influenced social learning theories in that they share an individual's ability to comprehend consequences of behavior and to consciously choose which construction of reality he/she will accept; evidence of cognitive social/psych theory is found in the social interaction of human beings and the subjectivity with which they weigh alternative behaviors based on perceived consequences of actions; and, basic human needs theory is represented in an individual's ability to change his/her construction of reality based on personal, social, or psychological needs.

Using Kelly's personal construct theory to find connections between specific forms of violence within specific contexts would have been very difficult. Although dynamic, its comprehensiveness is also its weakness in regard to this analysis. Initially this project began as a way to determine patterns and/or connections between forms of violence. Personal construct theory may have suggested that violence is a manifestation

of subjective constructions of reality—a conclusion that might have been slightly too ambiguous and would not have fit with the intention of this IPA.

Social Interactionist Theory. Social interactionist theory is an interdisciplinary theory that combines aggression, modeling behavior, rational choice, and perceived injustice from aspects of social learning theories, cognitive/social psychological theories, and criminological theories. It was developed by James Tedeschi and Richard Felson between 1982-1989 and will be described in further detail, as it is the theoretical foundation of this project.

Tedeschi & Felson's Social Interactionist Theory (SIT) is an interdisciplinary theory that defines aggressive or deviant behavior as coercive power. A social interactionist approach interprets aggression as instrumental behavior—as a means to achieving certain values or goals. It may be used to influence others, to establish and protect valued social identities, or to achieve justice or retribution (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993). Tedeschi and Felson focus on three types of coercive power: *Threats*, which are divided into contingent and noncontingent, where the former is a coercive action demanding compliance that will result in harm on a target for noncompliance, while the latter is a coercive action intended to frighten or humiliate the target person (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994).

Punishments, which are defined by Tedeschi & Felson (1994) as acts that intend to do harm and are divided into three categories: (a) physical harm, referring to physical events that cause pain or biological harm; (b) deprivation of resources, referring to

restricting opportunities, removal or destruction of material possessions, or interference with social relationships; or (c) social harm, which involves damage to the social identity of target persons and lowering of their power or status. It is important to note that a single action can, and often does, impose more than one type of harm.

Bodily force, the last of Tedeschi & Felson's types of coercive behavior, is defined as the use of physical contact to compel or constrain behaviors of another person. The basis for success in achieving compliance through bodily force may be superior bodily strength, the use of weapons, or the unexpectedness of the attack (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994).

Actors have a vested interest in minimizing injustices that they perpetrate, and victims often have a vested interest in exaggerating the degree of harm done and the responsibility of the actors. These divergent interests and attributional biases contribute to a widening of differences and the intensification of conflict between individuals (Tedeschi & Nesler; as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993).

When interests diverge, aggression is one method that individuals use to influence each other (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993). Social control plays a dual role in aggressive behavior. People engage in aggression as a form of control, and they are more likely to engage in coercive behavior, particularly severe forms, when they are less subject to internal and external controls (Felson & Tedeschi, p.3). According to Tedeschi & Felson (1994), people resort to coercive behavior for a variety of reasons, whether their goal is imposing harm or forcing compliance. Therefore, conflict within social interactionist

theory is symptomatic of the degree to which an individual possesses or lacks the following characteristics:

- Lack of self-confidence. Inarticulateness, inadequate education, and low self-esteem contribute to a person's sense of powerlessness and increase the likelihood of resorting to coercive means of influencing others.

- Failure to perceive costs. This occurs when an aggressor fails to consider future consequences of his/her action and any costs that might accrue through performing it. Anger, fear, alcohol consumption, and drug use all contribute to a person's failure to perceive costs.

- Self-preservation and face saving. Aggressive or coercive actions may occur because the aggressor feels it necessary to establish credibility. If an aggressor demands compliance and the victim does not comply, the aggressor is forced into a put-up or shut-up position.

- Maintenance of authority. A public display of punishment legitimizes the aggressor and serves the purpose of showing that the authority cannot be disobeyed without costs.

- Conflict intensity. This occurs when the goals of two or more adversaries are interdependent and incompatible and neither is willing to defer to the other.

Conflict breeds suspicion and distrust regarding the intentions and motives of the adversary. This process makes it more likely that coercive action will be used.

- Norms of self-defense and reciprocity. The norm of self-defense is a popular notion that legitimizes the use of coercive action in self-defense of family, property, or self. The norm of reciprocity is a negative norm that legitimizes retribution.

- Modeling. What has worked successfully in the home for resolving conflicts is the method the child will adopt when facing conflicts outside the home.

- Perceived injustice. Resentment and anger may lead an aggressor to coercive action against another person, a class of persons, a group, or an institution believed to be responsible for unfair or unjust treatment. Perceptions that social norms have been violated often serve to justify or legitimize collective violence.

Felson & Tedeschi (1993) state that a social interactionist perspective emphasizes social conflicts, power and influence, social identities, and retributive justice. They also acknowledge the existence of cognitions and emotions in determining social actions but remain critical of the view that inner forces such as aggressive energy, instincts, hormones, brain centers, Thanatos, or frustration compel aggression. Instead, aggressive

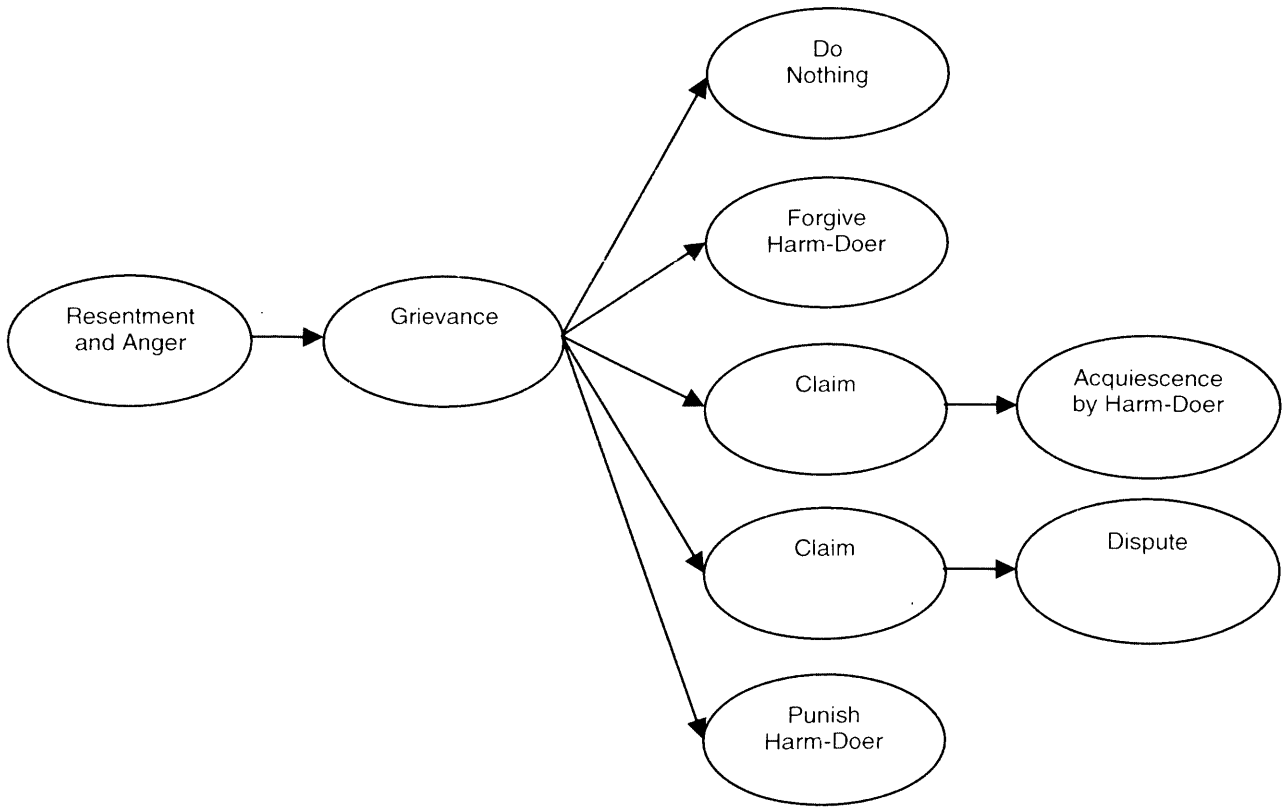
behavior is viewed as a normal consequence of conflict in human relations (Felson & Tedeschi, p.2). SIT is concerned with the social context and interpersonal objectives of the actors in explaining aggressive actions; outcomes are not predetermined but are a function of the dynamic interchange that occurs as aggressive incidents escalate (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993).

The focus of traditional theories on intrapersonal factors—such as hormones, brain centers, frustration, arousal, instincts, and human needs as proximal causes of aggression—is viewed [by Felson & Tedeschi] as at best misleading and at worst simply wrong (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993). SIT sees coercive actions as a form of social influence where the aggressor is seen as a decision maker who imposes harms or forces compliance to achieve valued outcomes (Felson & Tedeschi, p.176).

A key predictor of aggression is the perception by people that they have been attacked. People retaliate because they want to deter the antagonist from future attacks and because they view the retaliation as an act of justice (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993). Therefore, the decision to use aggressive means is then viewed as a rational choice in which both the rewards and costs of the action are considered (Felson & Tedeschi, p.8). The attribution of blame may be described as a decision tree. The perceiver tries to judge whether an action was intended or unintended. If intended, the perceiver makes another judgment pertaining to whether the motivation for the action was malevolent. If malevolent, the perceiver decides a course of action consistent with his/her grievance (Tedeschi & Nesler; as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993).

Figure 1.2 highlights Felson & Tedeschi's theory that aggressive or coercive action is a rational choice by an aggressor rather than a biological impulse, ontological need, or psychodynamic identity crisis. This figure demonstrates that any negative occurrence experienced by a person is cause for a grievance. Grievances are precursors to choosing whether or not to engage in aggressive or coercive behavior.

Figure 1.2 Decision Tree



Source: (Tedeschi & Nesler; as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993: 31)

To identify a particular action as aggressive requires an examination of both the intentions of the perpetrator and the perceptions and evaluations of the victim. The identification of a behavior as aggressive involves a description of social interaction that takes into account both the perpetrator's and the victim's points of view (Mummendey & Otten; as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993). Attributions of blame and injustice frequently lead to expressions of anger. Anger is a function of establishing one's identity as a strong and determined person who demands respect and will not tolerate being treated unjustly by others (Tedeschi & Nesler, 29).

According to Tedeschi & Nesler (as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993), there are four types of grievances: (a) Injury, pain, or unpleasant sensations produced by physical stimuli or the perception of intent to produce one or all of these, (b) loss of or damage to existing or expected goods or resources or the perception of an intent to impose deprivation of resources, (c) perceived damage to desired social identities, and (d) political harm in the form of violation of rights, interference with opportunities, or constraints on freedoms.

It is important to note that once a grievance is perceived, whether correctly or incorrectly, it does not go away and the aggressor does not forget its occurrence. According to SIT, a grievance is the rejection of an aggressor's right to control his/her external environment and maintain his/her authority. According to Tedeschi & Nesler (as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993), the lack of settlement of a grievance may act like an aggressive drive, maintaining a certain level of readiness to reciprocate the aggressive action until a viable opportunity arises. What is critical in understanding SIT is that in

any aggressive interaction, the interpretation and evaluation of the situational appropriateness of the aggressive action are a function of each participant's role in the specific interaction (Mummendey & Otten, p.148).

From Freud's psychodynamic theories to Bandura's social learning theories to Tedeschi and Felson's social interactionist theory, conflict theories can help make sense of data and give meaning to human behavior. Understanding the existence of worldviews can give a context for conflict and aid in perspective-taking and cognitive empathy.

Brief History of Conflict in Northern Ireland

Including a brief history of conflict in Northern Ireland is important in trying to give the reader a sense of the intensity and intractability of the conflict. Although numerous events throughout Northern Ireland's history have contributed to the continuity of the conflict, only major events have been included in this section. This section is designed to demonstrate a basic understanding of the conflict in Northern Ireland and to give the reader a context for violent social conflict.

Unionism vs. Nationalism

Predominantly Catholic Nationalists historically struggled to achieve freedom for all of Ireland by force or persuasion, while the mainly Protestant Unionists strove just as strongly to preserve the union with Britain. In 1885, in direct response to growing nationalist agitation, the Irish Protestants set out to construct a strong, united movement in Ireland. Although it originated in Dublin, the Protestant movement enjoyed most of its

support from the 890,000 Protestants living in Ulster. In part, Protestants supported union with Britain so fervently because of their instinctive loyalty towards Britain and the value and security of belonging to a Protestant majority in the United Kingdom, as opposed to being a minority in a predominantly Catholic, self-governing Ireland. This reflected their sense of national camaraderie and reinforced the fact that they differed from Catholics in religion, culture, ethnic origins, and political aspirations.

Ulster unionism was borne of exaggerated fears regarding the likely consequences of Irish self-government. Unionists assumed that in practice "Home Rule" would mean "Rome Rule" where the Catholic Church would exercise complete political influence and religious discrimination would be rampant, with them being excluded and isolated from public life.

Pre-1800

According to Barton (1996), the roots of Irish opposition to British rule go back over eight centuries to the first English invasions under Strongbow and his Norman kings in 1170. In almost every generation since then, armed conflict against British rule, often with a host of international help, took place. In 1539, Henry VIII separated the Church of England from Rome, whereupon the Irish people stayed faithful to Rome. The old Celtic order, with its clans, minor kings, and common land ownership, its Catholic religion, and its own language and customs, gradually disappeared from Ulster to Europe after the departure of the Irish chieftains and wealthy Catholic political leaders after their disastrous defeat by English Protestants in 1603.

The 1689 siege of Derry saw Catholic King James II defeated by Protestant William of Orange in the Battle of the Boyne, and 1690 saw a massive Protestant settlement that ultimately secured all of Ulster for Protestant citizens.

1800-1912

1800 saw the Act of Union ratified in the British Parliament, which set up the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. From 1801 until 1921, the entire country was ruled directly from Westminster, where Ireland was represented in the British House of Commons. During this time the seeds of modern Irish nationalism were sown in two separate ways: (a) constitutional efforts to secure varying degrees of political independence, or "Home Rule," and (b) complete independence to be won by military means (Baron, 1996). The constitutional nationalists formed non-violent political organizations, which sought change peacefully through legislation at Westminster called the "Home Rule" movement. The militant nationalist movement sought a fully independent, 32-county republic to be achieved by force.

Between June and October of 1866, the debate at Westminster regarding the status of the first Home Rule bill saw the worst riots of the century, during which 32 people died and 370 were wounded (Baron, 1996).

By 1912, covert plans had been made for the formation of the first paramilitary organization, were Britain to attempt to enforce the Home Rule bill and impose all-Ireland institutions. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was to be composed of adult males of military age who had signed a covenant to give their lives for Ulster. The UVF

was established to preserve Protestant unity and discipline and to exert extra pressure on the British government, as well as a means of preparing for the use of physical force to resist Irish self-government.

1914-1921

By mid-1914, after a covert shipment of arms from Germany was dispersed under the cover of darkness, the 90,000 men that had enlisted in the UVF were now ready to use violent means to preserve their unity with Britain. After importing 140 tons of arms and ammunition from Germany in 1914, Unionists knew that any attempt to impose self-rule on the northern six counties would result in massive bloodshed.

Nationalists also began the long campaign of organizing themselves in 1913 when, after realizing the strength of the UVF, they decided to form the Irish Volunteer Force (later to be known as the Irish Republican Army or IRA) in an effort to counter the UVF and reinforce their demand for self-government. The IRA had also begun arming themselves in July of 1914, when its 180,000 members organized an illegal shipment of arms from Germany. Their strength and membership added to their growing confidence that a free Ireland was imminent, but their newfound weapons added to their understanding that freedom and sovereignty would come only after struggle and bloodshed.

In 1920, after WWI, British ministers decided to re-address the Ireland question. From their efforts came the Government of Ireland Act, which effectively partitioned Ireland and established two Irish parliaments, each of which was granted limited powers

of self-government. One parliament in Dublin would be used to govern the lower 26 counties of "southern" Ireland, while the parliament in Belfast was to govern the six counties of "northern" Ireland.

Nationalist reaction to the 1920 Act was nothing less than utter dismay. They opposed partition of Ireland in any form, as they saw Ireland as an indivisible unitary state. The 1920 Act passed almost unnoticed in Nationalist Ireland, as its terms were regarded as irrelevant throughout Nationalist leadership.

The Government of Ireland Act was introduced on May 3, 1921. Though provided with limited powers, its members were nonetheless responsible for keeping "peace, order, and good government" of the State. The decentralized structures of the 1920 Act survived for over fifty years.

1950-1968

Economic growth and steady social improvement after WWII led to a unique sense of peace and sociopolitical stability in Northern Ireland. In contrast, economic stagnancy and a lack of social development plagued the Republic of Ireland during the post-war years. Lower unemployment rates, higher welfare benefits, a 2% annual growth of industry, three times more spending on higher education, and a 10% increase in prices for agricultural products characterized the flourishing economic and social structures of the northern six counties over those of the southern 26. Unionist propaganda used the booming economy to prove the destructiveness and corrosiveness of Catholicism.

Nationalist reaction to the accusations of economic and social impotence became obvious in 1951 during a series of daring arms raids on army barracks at Derry, Armagh, Omagh, and in England. The IRA adopted guerilla warfare tactics by attacking Unionist property and infrastructure, including RUC stations, government property, bridges and essential services. Over the course of the six-year campaign, the IRA was involved in roughly 600 violent incidents and was responsible for the deaths of 18 people (12 of them IRA members).

1969-Present

British troops in Northern Ireland. During the summer of 1969, "marching season," politics, and civil rights clashes manifested and erupted in the form of furious riots. Derry set the stage for the latest explosion of violence. Protestant demonstrations on July 13 sparked furious riots which were compounded even more intensely on August, 12 during the infamous "Battle of the Bogside," a cataclysmic Catholic/police confrontation. In response to the plight of their Catholic brethren, nationalists throughout Northern Ireland attacked RUC stations in Coalisland, Strabane, Newry, Lurgan, Dungiven, Enniskillen, and west Belfast.

Eventually as Derry eased, Belfast tensed, and with security forces already overstretched and facing exhaustion, on August 14, Home Secretary James Callaghan ordered British troops into the streets of Northern Ireland. By the end of the summer of 1969, 1,826 families were driven from their homes, 1,500 of which were Catholic; 7 people died, and 750 were injured (Barton, 1996). After being humiliated by IRA

ineffectiveness and powerlessness in protecting Catholics in Belfast, as well as the perceived welcome given to British soldiers in Nationalist pubs, Republicans interested in traditional republicanism formed the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). Wesminster's decision to deploy troops to Derry and Belfast concluded fifty years of its policy of "benign neglect."

Sending British troops into the streets of Ireland to keep the peace in what Nationalists saw as a "free" country added insult to injury by bolstering the political presence of Britain in Ireland and reinforcing Ireland's inability to govern itself or quell its own domestic conflict. This course of events also contributed to the Unionist's perceived barbarism of Irish people in that Britain was forced to invoke drastic military measures to contain the furiously militant Irish people (Barton, 1996).

New sectarian organizations. The Provisional IRA had little interest in social reform or civil rights—they were interested in a revival of physical-force republicanism bent on getting "Brits Out!" and the formation of a self-governing Ireland. The first objective of the Provisionals was to gain leadership in the Nationalist sections of Belfast and Derry. They achieved this by inciting riots and focusing street violence on British troops—an agenda that resulted in retaliatory attacks by RUC soldiers on Catholic neighborhoods. In 1970, the political violence was responsible for 25 deaths, 213 shootings, and 150 bombings (Barton, 1996).

Meanwhile, in 1971, republican violence, ineffective security forces, and a spontaneous initiative by working-class Protestants to blockade streets to prevent IRA sniping and bombing led to the formation of the Ulster Defense Association (UDA); a

Loyalist paramilitary organization that reached 40,000 members and was a recognized and legal defense organization until 1992. For the most part, Loyalist paramilitaries focused on seeking revenge for republican violence, pressuring the PIRA to abandon its campaign of violence, and convincing the Catholic minority that severe consequences awaited those that even passively supported Provisional activities.

Bloody Sunday. A Catholic-led non-violent civil rights march was scheduled to take place in Derry on January 30, 1972. The British government saw this as a direct denial of their ban on demonstrations and an indirect denial of their authority and thus, sent the 1st Parachute Regiment of the British army to simply confine the marchers to Catholic areas but to deal harshly with hooligans and snipers. An under-staffed and under-trained regiment of the RUC eventually came to believe they were being fired upon. "They fired 108 rounds, causing the death of 13 men, none of whom were proven to have been handling a firearm or bomb at the time" (Barton, 1996). It is important to note that this event has forever been a highly controversial occurrence in the history to Northern Ireland and according to Barton (p. 154); a government inquiry concluded the troops acted recklessly, but that they were fired on in the midst of a very dangerous situation. This conclusion vastly contradicts that of the Derry city coroner who concluded the troops committed "unadulterated murder." Incidentally, as of this publication, a second government-sponsored inquiry is underway in Derry.

PIRA reaction to Blood Sunday was to continue their current campaign of indiscriminate violence, which manifested in the February 2 burning of the British Embassy in Dublin. On July 9, after negotiations of British withdrawal from Ireland

were never really legitimized, 22 bombs exploded in Belfast, killing nine people in what was to be called "Bloody Friday." Incidentally, 1972 proved to be the most violent year of the "Troubles"—467 people died, 10,600 were shot, and 1,380 bombs exploded (Barton, 1996).

Hunger Strikers. According to Hennessey (1997), on March 1, 1981, Bobby Sands—a PIRA member serving a 14-year sentence for firearms offenses—led a 10-man hunger strike in protest of the unwillingness of the British government to recognize political terrorists as POWs, a recognition that would have afforded him and his compatriots additional rights and privileges in prison. Their privileges would have included the right to wear their own clothes, to be exempt from prison work, additional recreational facilities, freedom of association, and the return of "remission of sentences"—a privilege they lost on protest.

Bobby Sands thought of himself as a political prisoner who was "a casualty of a perennial war that is being fought between the oppressed Irish people and an alien, oppressive, unwarranted regime that refused to withdraw from Ireland" (Hennessey, 1997). From his perspective, Bobby Sands was dying not just to end the barbarity of Maze prison or to gain the rightful recognition as a political prisoner, but for the republic and the 'wretched oppressed' Irish people (p. 261).

The British government refused to negotiate their position and felt no obligation to bow to the demands of what they thought were terrorists. Bobby Sands died in the Maze prison on the 66th day of his hunger strike, while his nine compatriots lasted anywhere from 46 to 73 days. With each death, a number of social recognitions became

possible for the IRA, which had not been possible before. According to Hennessey (1997), most importantly, perhaps, was the overall sense of respect for the IRA within Catholic communities. A paramilitary organization that was once seen as a band of thugs and killers, and whose support would invite immediate condemnation from Church and state, was being legitimized in Nationalist communities.

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher summed up the position of the British government in a comment in the House of Commons when she said, "Mr. Sands was a convicted criminal. He chose to take his own life. It was a choice that his organization did not allow to many of its victims" (Hennessey, 1997).

The Republican community was outraged at the callousness of the position of the Thatcher government and continued its campaign of violence in retribution for what they saw as the preventable death of Sands and nine other Republican martyrs. Hennessey (1997) detailed the mood of the paramilitary organizations during this time period when he wrote,

> Sixty-one other people died in violent incidents during the hunger strikes. Fifteen RUC men, eight soldiers and seven members of the UDR died in bombings and shootings; five of the soldiers died in a land mine explosion. Thirty-four civilians were also killed, seven of them as a result of injuries from plastic bullets fired by security forces...after the hunger strikes, violence increased, with the number of people killed jumping from 76 in the previous year to 101, shootings from 642 to 1,142, and bombings from 400 to 529.

The violence continued in the wake of a series of unsuccessful negotiations that included the British government and both Loyalist and Nationalist leadership. Successive IRA bombs in 1991 and 1992 exploded in Belfast and other predominantly Protestant cities throughout Northern Ireland, while successive PIRA bombs exploded in London in

1992 and 1993. The Loyalist paramilitary response consisted of continued random attacks on Catholic neighborhoods, with the ultimate goal being to coerce the Republicans into accepting British rule.

Downing Street Declaration. Under threats of continued bombing on the British mainland and in an effort to stop the hostilities between both factions in Northern Ireland, the Downing Street Declaration was signed on August 31, 1994. Essentially, it stated that the British government no longer possessed any selfish economic or strategic interest in Northern Ireland. The British government accepted in principle Ireland's right to self-determination and the need for further change. But, to the dismay of the Nationalist community, the document stated that any movement toward unity would require the unanimous consent of Northern Ireland, while the British government offered no commitment to try to persuade the Unionist community to unite Ireland.

Both Sinn Fein (the political wing of the IRA) and the PIRA were convinced that their respective agendas would be satisfied through cooperative inter-party talks and, thus, declared a "complete cessation of all military operations" to take effect at midnight on August 31, 1994.

Having initially greeted the PIRA cease-fire with suspicion and skepticism, the Loyalist paramilitaries were reassured by the U.S. government and the text of the Declaration that clearly stated that the constitutional position of Northern Ireland would not change without majority consent. On October 13, 1994, at a packed press conference, Loyalist paramilitary organizations declared a cease-fire to take effect from midnight until such time as the Nationalists broke their cease-fire.

Bilateral fear, suspicion, and distrust of the other side compounded by and an outright refusal by the Provisional IRA to decommission weapons—thus, ignoring the obligations of the cease-fire—led to the ultimate demise of the peace process. On February 4, 1996, a massive IRA bomb exploded in an underground parking ramp near Canary Wharf in London, killing two men and injuring more than one hundred. The Nationalists claimed the British government ended the cease-fire by refusing to put the rights and welfare of the people of Ireland before selfish partisan politics. For Unionists, the bombing only confirmed their fears and suspicions about the manipulative nature of the IRA and their unwillingness to follow the obligations of a cease-fire.

Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. The emphasis that the newly elected Labour party in England (in 1997) placed on reaching a settlement in Northern Ireland and the perception among both Nationalist and Unionist communities that Labour policies could offer a new approach to Northern Ireland led to a 1997 IRA-led cease-fire. After more than six months of negotiations, eight political parties in Northern Ireland, along with the governments in London and Dublin, agreed on what has become known as the "Good Friday Agreement" or "Belfast Agreement;" a discrepancy that depends upon one's religion.

The Agreement, offered to the citizens of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic in the form of a referendum rather than a government mandate and subsequently endorsed by majorities on both sides of the border, established a 108-member legislative assembly in Northern Ireland to be elected by popular vote. The assembly has a wide variety of powers ranging from economic policy and health care to education and

tourism. The most crucial aspect of the Northern Ireland assembly is that it retains a degree of power over security and justice policies. Also, in an effort to coordinate cross-border cooperation between Northern Ireland and the Republic, the Agreement created a North/South Ministerial Council consisting of elected delegates.

According to Shirlow (2001), while the Good Friday Agreement upholds the constitutional integrity of Northern Ireland and endorses Nationalist self-determination similar to the Dowling Street Declaration, the Agreement is based upon three additional details that are crucial in building multilateral confidence in the process and its ability to maintain peace. First, the Agreement is based upon the creation of a federal relationship within which Westminster cannot exercise power in Northern Ireland if the execution of that power contradicts the Agreement. Second, Northern Ireland, unlike Wales and Scotland, can, via the 1998 Northern Ireland Act, expand upon its federal status within the U.K. or even leave the U.K. if desired. Third, as of 1994, the Irish Republic recognizes Northern Ireland as a legitimate political and constitutional entity.

Although the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement seems to have quelled the militant tendencies in the major paramilitary organizations, according to Shirlow (2001), the first five months of 2001 saw more than 100 pipe bomb attacks, 60 paramilitary-led punishment beatings, attempted bombings, the bombing of the BBC in London, and multiple shootings. He wrote,

> The inability of devolution to reverse perceptions of religious discrimination and the sense that communities are being socially and culturally marginalized due to political as opposed to economic factors has serious consequences in terms of creating faith and support for political reconciliation.

Despite the enduring efforts of political figures, political parties, and numerous peace processes, the basic question of identity of people in Northern Ireland remains constant. As long as Protestants maintain their instinctive loyalty to Britain and fear of minority status in a Catholic country, and Catholics see themselves as oppressed victims of the imperialist British government, the terrorist campaigns will continue in Northern Ireland; perhaps under a different name, with different political support, using different propaganda, and citing different goals, but it will continue until the question of identity in Northern Ireland is reconciled.

Social Interactionist Theory & Northern Ireland

SIT offers valuable insight into why a husband abuses his wife in a domestic setting, and to some degree, why a Unionist attacks a Nationalist (or a Nationalist attacks a Unionist) in a social or political setting. According to Tedeschi, coercion usually occurs between antagonists that have divergent perspectives about the instigation of hostilities and the locus of blame (Tedeschi & Nesler; as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993). In Northern Ireland, the theory suggests coercion is used to gain control over one's external environment, whether at home or on the street, and to reinforce the perceived inferiority, subordination, and powerlessness of the "other side." Tedeschi & Felson's (1994) theory suggests that warring factions like Nationalists and Unionists, who have a long and complex history of conflict, perpetuate their problems through perceived historical injustices, self defense at the threat of extinction, reciprocal and

vengeful hostility, maintaining conflict intensity, and desperate attempts preserve cultural heritage and national identity.

Social Interactionist Theory & Domestic Violence

Violent behavior is perpetrated to cause psychological injury to its victim, damage one's social identity, and ultimately lower one's power and status. Coercion in SIT is intended by the abuser to cause some degree of change in the victim; it represents a series of choices utilized to gain compliance (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994). Coercion often involves some degree of premeditation and is usually a reaction to the actor's perceptions of opportunities, normative requirements, and provocations (Tedeschi & Felson, 175). Domestic violence is sometimes about control over one's external environment and the domination of a perceived subordinate victim. According to SIT, domestic violence is a choice made by a perpetrator that occurs due to a combination of a lack of self-confidence and feelings of powerlessness, a failure to recognize consequences of aggression, saving face by demonstrations of rigid masculinity, and using aggression to maintain authority over one's environment.

Assumptions Regarding Social Conflict and Domestic Violence

After limited research of Northern Ireland and domestic violence, hypotheses were formed about what would be found in further research and what the connection between social conflict and domestic violence really looked like. It was assumed that extended social conflict, like the kind experienced in Northern Ireland, is so enveloping that it affects every facet of society. It was further assumed that the social conflict in

Northern Ireland would have, over time, created a society more tolerant of violent behavior and more predisposed to act aggressively itself.

A question arose about what would happen to an inherently aggressive society, had its outlet for aggression been taken away through cease-fires and other political maneuvers. The connection seemed clear that if a Unionist living in Northern Ireland was raised to distrust Nationalists, and one day a politician told that Unionist to stop fighting Nationalists, eventually, that combative person might need an outlet for his/her sedentary aggression. Eventually, an aggressive person who traditionally uses other socio-religious groups as scapegoats or targets for his/her aggressive behavior might begin to experience a sense of complacency. His/her complacency might lead to self-reflection and questions of identity, morality, and strength of religious faith. If indeed some people in Northern Ireland are more tolerant of aggressive behavior and more willing to engage in coercive action themselves, their natural reaction might be to seek an outlet for that sedentary aggression. If that outlet cannot be a social or political one, it could be a domestic one. Thus, it was hypothesized that levels of domestic violence in Northern Ireland during times of cease-fire would increase significantly.

Objectives and Research Questions

Given the social/psychological focus of Tedeschi's social interactionist theory, combined with its ability to address causes of social conflict and domestic violence, SIT seemed to best explain the issue of aggressive behavior and determine why it happens. As it was understood, SIT sought to find qualitative connections between the types of violence being studied in this IPA. Also, SIT is dynamic enough to be able to apply to

social phenomena, as well as interpersonal phenomena. Tedeschi's willingness to acknowledge that cognitions, emotions, and some intrapersonal characteristics play a role in aggressive behavior adds to the strength of his theory. And, his stress on the idea that aggressive people consciously choose to act aggressively is a compelling commentary on personal accountability

Research Questions

Question #1: Who was the abuser? Who was the victim?

The vast majority of literature on domestic violence is written from the perspective of male abuse perpetrated on female victims. According to the European Campaign against Domestic Violence (2000), 98% of reported victims of domestic violence are women. This frightening disparity speaks to a higher likelihood of aggressive behavior being perpetrated by males; a reality that is compounded in patriarchal societies that perpetuate traditional social and sexual gender roles. This question was helpful in determining whether that same pattern existed in the research found.

Question #2: What caused the use of violence?

Much of the literature on domestic violence suggests that the causes of domestic violence are not objectively uniform. Domestic violence is not completely random but simply not understood given the current data available. According to the literature, domestic violence seems to be an explosion of emotion caused by a combination of

cognitive malfunction and subjective situational factors resulting in aggressive behavior. The situational factors are referred to as "triggers" and are understood to catapult an already tense or strained situation into violence. By looking at triggers in domestic violence cases, ideally, one is able to find patterns that always, sometimes, or never lead to coercive or aggressive behavior.

Question #3: What was happening externally when violence was used?

The original hypothesis of this IPA stated that domestic violence is socially influenced. In trying to uncover data to support it, it is helpful to study the social circumstances that surround occurrences of domestic violence. Again, when seeking patterns, it is helpful to understand the level of social violence occurring during or before an aggressive situation to try to infer whether that aggressive situation contributed to domestic violence.

Question #4: Was the violence sustained or sporadic?

If it had been found that in a majority of domestic violence cases, the perpetrator's violent behavior was sustained and seemed to transcend any social circumstances, it would be reasonable to infer that social factors had little or no influence on that perpetrator's violent disposition. Conversely, if it had been found that violent episodes occurred sporadically and *only* during times of social complacency or cease-fire, a reasonable inference may suggest a connection.

Question #5: Do social patterns exist? (I.e., education level, class status, alcohol, etc.)

If the education level of all perpetrators of domestic violence is similar, or if the financial disposition or class status is similar, or if alcohol use is a factor in every case of domestic violence, a pattern begins to emerge. This pattern would suggest that domestic violence is not misunderstood or random but happens because of certain sociological circumstances that combine to ultimately lead to violent behavior. Answers to this question would clarify the issue of causal factors and begin to name specific factors or circumstances that are objectively consistent, thus allowing correlations to be drawn, behavior to be predicted, and aggressive behavior prevented.

Scope of Study

Domestic violence is a hugely complex issue that is being studied throughout the world. Social conflict is another complex and confusing phenomenon that has many faces, many definitions, and many causes. Both phenomena have been occurring in Northern Ireland since early in the fourteenth century (McWilliams & Spence, 1996). The compelling concept used to try to make sense of these enormously complex issues is whether domestic violence happens more frequently in Northern Ireland as a result of a decrease in social conflict.

Limitations of the study

Limitation #1: Human behavior

Some inherent limitations exist when trying to understand, gain insights, or generalize the behavior of human beings. Any attempt in this analysis to make broad sweeping generalizations regarding why people abuse their partners or why people fight each other will, to some degree, exclude some and include others erroneously. Because this researcher is neither a sociologist nor a psychologist, some inherent misunderstandings of theories and individual vs. group behavior will inevitably occur. Conclusions regarding Northern Ireland and its people can be drawn only to the degree that the data used are accurate and unbiased. However, by nature, a study of human beings by human beings is going to reflect the subjective attitudes and worldviews of the persons conducting the study as well as the participants in the study.

Limitation #2: Access to data/accuracy of data

First, the statistics and information received from various women's organizations and the Northern Ireland government have been compiled largely through government funding. Government funding in Northern Ireland comes from the British government and inherently reflects the sociopolitical agenda of the British government at the particular time the study was conducted. In essence, the information received could potentially convey a socially constructed reality, rather than a social truth regarding domestic violence and social conflict.

Second, the violent history of Northern Ireland may skew otherwise objective opinions of society. Having spoken with residents of Belfast about the history of violence and the cause of domestic violence, it was clear that issues of social conflict lie

just beneath the surface of neutrality—meaning that just beneath the surface of these seemingly neutral citizens, lays their political affiliations. Inevitably, political affiliations skew one's perspective about cause of violence and finding blame. Tedeschi's "perceived injustice" section in the justifications for coercive action effectively explains this point.

Third, original research was only conducted in Belfast. Although the organizations that were interviewed span the entire country and operate under the same policies, some degree of generalization will be assumed in making conclusions and/or recommending areas of further research in Northern Ireland.

Fourth, as was mentioned in the "Overview of conflict theories" section, worldviews are cognitive structures that may be influenced by emotions, biases, and experiences that shape an individual's understanding of a conflictual situation. People's religion, political affiliation, history, education, and prejudices tend to define their worldview. As a result, some communities tend to support their identifying communities regardless of their feelings about the origins of the social conflict. The presence of a worldview is unavoidable; this is neither positive nor negative, just a reality that should be considered when interpreting data and offering recommendations based on said data.

Fifth, the number of scholars asking questions about a connection between social conflict and domestic violence is extremely limited. In fact, Queens University in Belfast has one professor researching a connection between social conflict and domestic violence, which is manifested in a training manual for dealing with victims of domestic violence. Likewise, Monica McWilliams, an author who has been researched and quoted

considerably in this IPA, and a faculty member at the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland, seems to be the only faculty member at the University of Ulster asking these questions. Plenty of literature exists on the psychological causes of violence but strikingly little on the contributing social factors.

Limitation #3: Worldviews are not universal

First, it is very difficult to understand peoples' personal experiences of violence. It is not an easy subject to broach and generally people grow suspicious when asked about their affiliations and/or experience with domestic violence. An aggression theory is being used to find patterns of causal factors, when, historically speaking, patterns have yet to be found when trying to understand human actions and reactions. However, if a pattern is to be found, social interactionist theory is a good candidate to lead researchers to it, as SIT uses a unique approach of analyzing surrounding social influences on certain behavior, rather than focusing on specific psychodynamic or biological reasons for aggressive behavior.

Second, one worldview, whether Tedeschi's SIT or any other theory, is not going to be able to answer all the questions or address all the issues involved, when studying something as persistent as social conflict or complex as domestic violence in Northern Ireland. This IPA purports to use an aggression theory to infer certain facts about human behavior in conflictual situations in Northern Ireland. Ultimately, this IPA will only present a single theory and worldview to use when approaching this subject. To ask a

single theory to explain a concept as complex as social conflict and/or domestic violence is to unrealistically rely on that theory.

Third, an American researching a Northern Irish phenomenon from thousands of miles away is a glaring and unavoidable limitation. By virtue of not having been raised in the culture, there are inevitably going to be certain nuances and cultural truths that have been missed and mistakenly excluded from this IPA. However, this limitation does not preclude the ability to carefully research existing literature and possibly offer insights into the situation. The fact that this researcher has not been raised in Northern Ireland presents both a huge limitation and a unique advantage. According to conflict theory, when studying a conflictual situation, one is encouraged to step outside the situation, analyze it objectively, and ultimately use cognitive empathy to try to see things from another's perspective. Given the context of this study, if one is not from Northern Ireland, he/she may have fewer emotional and political allegiances to either side of the conflict and can rely on some degree of objectivity to understand both sides of this broad social conflict.

Limitation #4: Particularity of Northern Ireland

First, the literature suggests that Northern Ireland is to some degree a homogeneous and closed society, yet remains a religiously and politically divided society. People tend to see their home as their sanctuary; a place that cannot be invaded by curious neighbors or meddlesome law enforcement officials. Specifically regarding existing data on domestic violence, many Northern Irish families agree that what happens in the home, stays in the home. One example of this was a 1980 magistrate who had to

adjourn his courtroom so he could re-read the statutes on exclusion orders (McWilliams; as cited in Dobash & Dobash, 1998). He did not believe that a man could be legally removed from his home.

Second, it was suggested during one interview that a certain amount of humiliation exists in being a victim and perceiving oneself as incapable of controlling one's domestic issues. According to Ms. A (2001), attitudes about the subordination of women are changing, but rigid gender inequities still women's traditional roles as homemaker, mother, and servant to preclude their independence—a reality that contributes to the sense of humiliation from being a victim. As an outsider asking questions about an extremely private part of individuals' lives, the researcher lacks camaraderie with either group and will undoubtedly miss some degree of honesty and candidness about the causes of violence. This is delicate territory for any researcher, and in most cases will limit accurate findings.

Limitation #5: Things consciously excluded

There are certain areas of domestic violence and social conflict that have been consciously excluded from this IPA as they would significantly broaden the scope while sacrificing the focus of this study. First, the role of legal system in Northern Ireland has been excluded, despite some valuable information regarding statutes dealing with aggressive behavior and abusive partners. Second, most of the information on the wealth of social services available to victims in the home and victims that have left the abusive environment but lack skills and resources to be self-sufficient has also been excluded.

Third, the large amount of research available that offer a strictly psychological analysis of the causes of domestic violence and/or social conflict have been excluded.

Despite their relevance and importance to the subjects of domestic violence and social conflict, these areas have been excluded from this IPA because of their inability to speak directly to the causal factors of these types of violence from a sociological standpoint. SIT was chosen because of its ability to speak directly to types of coercive behavior that force compliance or cause harm to individuals to achieve certain outcomes. Furthermore, SIT is used as the base theory for this IPA because of its contention that people make rational choices to act in aggressive ways toward one another. However, writing an IPA on domestic violence and social conflict while excluding the psychological causes for aggression, the role of the legal system, and social service agencies available to victims will be an inevitable limitation that, hopefully, will not invalidate the findings of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review Regarding Violence in Northern Ireland

Selected Sources and Literature Questions

It must be noted that these sources are selected sources available on domestic violence and social conflict in Northern Ireland. These sources have been chosen as examples of existing literature on one of four areas of research: Background literature on domestic violence; background literature on Northern Ireland; literature addressing the victims of domestic violence; and background literature on the connection between social conflict and domestic violence.

Analysis of such a complex topic began by using the literature to identify causal factors specific to domestic violence in Northern Ireland. Painstakingly thorough research conducted by Dobash & Dobash (1998), documented interviews of victims of domestic violence within the U.K. Their findings were very helpful but focused mostly on types rather than causes of abuse. However, additional information offered by some abusers in these interviews suggested patterns for their behavior. From these patterns, some specific questions were formulated that were seen to help inform areas of research that may have been overlooked. Therefore, the literature was approached with seven specific questions in mind, all of which were used to help narrow the path of understanding and process the immense amount of research encountered. These seven questions include:

Question #1: Why do some people in Northern Ireland resort to violence to settle their differences?

Question #2: Does a connection exist between the prevalence of social conflict and levels of domestic violence in Northern Ireland?

Question #3: Can James Tedeschi's social interactionist theory help provide insight into how social conflict and domestic violence might be related in Northern Ireland?

Question #4: Are there variables that contribute to social conflict and domestic violence that have been overlooked or not identified at all?

Question #5: Is domestic violence prevalent in Northern Ireland during times of cease-fire *and* times of conflict?

Question #6: Is domestic violence prevalent in societies not divided by social conflict? If so, how prevalent?

Question #7: Do abusers in Northern Ireland seem to resort to domestic violence as an outlet for their aggression?

Care had to be taken to filter out causal factors pertaining to psychological and criminological disposition of the perpetrators, while sociological circumstances surrounding aggressive behavior had to be highlighted. After a basic list of sociological variables was identified, they could be applied to the findings from Northern Ireland using a social interactionist perspective to identify consistencies or inconsistencies with

the theory. These types of questions were kept in mind to narrow the focus of this project and guide the researcher in trying to make sense of the available literature.

Background literature on domestic violence

According to Dobash & Dobash (1998), violent acts occur within a context of conflict, intimidation, coercion, and hostility. Once violence has been used, it facilitates men's ability to control their partner through various forms of intimidating behavior, as well as through subsequent acts of violence. Despite the research that has been done, it is still impossible to make an accurate statement on the prevalence on domestic violence. This is partly to do with the lack of consistency in recording incidents. Because domestic violence involves the use of physical or emotional force or threat within close adult relationships, its impact and consequences tend to be hidden or minimized (Department of Economic Development, 1999). A focus only on abuse resulting in injury overlooks the reality of violent domestic relationships that are characterized by power and control. Psychological abuse, threats, manipulation, coercion, and deprivation are all less well-known forms of domestic violence but are for some women the most difficult aspects to contend with (Department of Economic Development, p. 11).

A recent report in Great Britain concluded that domestic violence was amongst the most serious of Northern Ireland's social problems, important not only for the suffering it caused but for its effect on the community as a whole (McWilliams & Spence, 1996). Many of the typical communication problems have been ameliorated to an extent by the numerous international conferences dealing with the issue of violence

against women, the emphasis and focus on violence in the family by governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and the Internet, which makes it easier to communicate quickly even in less-developed countries (Walker, 1999). Member delegates and the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that participated in the fourth United Nations International Conference on Women, held in China in 1995, gained a better understanding of the ways in which both the actual experience and the fear of violence in the home can rob women of the health, self-esteem, and confidence needed to take their rightful places in the world (Walker, 1999).

Men, who use violence more often than women, do so in order to obtain and maintain power and control over others (Walker, 1999). It may be that men who are less securely attached and who find themselves relying heavily on their partners for support and a sense of safety may become violent when their partners do not provide the high level of reassurance and assistance they desire...By not meeting stereotypic gender role expectations for men to be self-sufficient and independent, the batterer may also resort to violence to affirm his own masculinity (Babcock et al., 2000). Many abusers commit the most dangerous and serious violent acts against their partners. Some have the kind of obsessive thinking that underlies continued stalking and harassment behavior, especially after the woman attempts to terminate the relationship (Walker, 1995).

The narcissism and independence of abusers may also contribute to their inability to judge the needs of their partners, and their continued contempt and belligerence seems to lower the women's self-esteem even further (Walker, 1995). The profile of anger thought to occur in domestic batterers has commonly been described as involving

suspiciousness to the point of paranoiac jealousy and a tendency to forcibly dominate their partners through coercive and assaultive behaviors (Cahn, 1988). In fact, it may be the inability on the part of husbands to get what *they* need verbally that helps shape physical aggression and, eventually, the latter may be the only method found by the husbands to achieve subservience and control from their wives (Cordova et al., 1993).

Real or perceived challenges to the man's possession, authority, or control most often result in the use of violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1996). A simultaneously angry and depressed man may attempt to compensate for perceived lack of power and self-efficacy by forcibly manipulating a less powerful, easily victimized female partner who is immediately available within the privacy of the home environment (Cahn, 1988). The depressive affect may be associated with a sense of personal injury, particularly when combined with real or perceived fidelity conflicts and with intense anger that erupts explosively in the form of violent and homicidal behavior (Cahn, 1988). Men who are unable to effect their intentions through negotiation and who find that nonphysical coercion may be insufficient in their attempts to achieve their own intentions may resort to pushing, slapping, beating, and so forth (Babcock et al., 1993).

According to Walker (1999), when women and girls are the primary targets of male abuse, violence cannot be eradicated without looking carefully at the gender socialization issues that maintain if not actually facilitate such violence in the home. Individual traits or behavioral dispositions, perception, interaction styles, and social norms are all likely to be associated with power in marriages. When power or status discrepancies exist in a marriage and when the husband has a history of being violent,

physical aggression may be the only effective mode of stopping an argument or asserting a dominant position when both he and his wife lack verbal skill (Babcock et al., 1993). Babcock et al. (1993) also found that communication skill deficits might threaten the "patriarchal social order" and limit the man's repertoire of conflict resolution skills. If the wife is more verbally competent than her husband, his only effective expressive retort may be physical aggression.

Many authors including Dobash & Dobash (1996), Cahn (1998), Dutton et al. (1996), and Collins et al. (1986) have suggested that the potential for violence is increased when traditional sex roles are challenged. Males who doubt their ability to live up to their own excessively rigid sex role expectations are likely to reject "weakness" in themselves as feminine and project responsibility for their failings on to women (Collins et al., 1986). Clinical reports have suggested that domestically violent men are frequently characterized by alcohol abuse, poor self-concept, rigid attitudes toward control and sex-role differentiation, and suspiciousness and jealousy, which often become manifested in violent outbursts (Cahn, 1988). Cahn also suggests that some investigators have questioned the magnitude and importance of anger as a problem for perpetrators of domestic violence and have suggested that a host of other attitudes and needs, such as sex-role rigidity, dominance, and control, may be more closely related.

Behavior learned within the family and relationships experienced within the home lay the foundations for adult life. Witnessing violence in the home can have the effect of teaching that violence is a normal and, therefore, legitimate response to problems (Department of Economic Development, 1999). Men that were witness to

abuse as children learned not merely to model violence, but that intimate relationships were painful and unrewarding. Also, given the necessity of nonabusive, nonrejecting relationships for healthy ego development, such men were presented with a dilemma: the relationships they needed to keep their egoidentity intact were the very ones they found difficult (Dutton et al., 1996). This theory is strikingly similar to Tedeschi's "modeling" justification for the use of coercive power in social interactionist theory.

There is voluminous literature in many fields including sociology, psychology, social work, and conflict theory that illustrates how repressed anger erupts and, by overriding the individual's self-control, lashes out in ways that inflict terrible physical and emotional damage on its victims—chiefly those who are weak, dependent, and vulnerable (Levine, 1986). For example, women have been killed, pregnant women have been beaten, women have suffered miscarriages, and been raped by their partners as a result of an eruption of repressed anger or frustration (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993).

Sadly, many who have abused family members express no remorse and exhibit no signs of guilt which is symptomatic of their having strikingly inadequate consciences, a serious deficiency in human development that may or may not reflect the weakness of contemporary moral standards in society (Levine, 1986). Moreover, several investigators of conjugal violence have concluded that violence is often used to establish the dominance of the aggressor and that the continued threat of violence is used to maintain dominance (Resick & Reese, 1986). Insecurity, depression, and sensitivity to criticism, all resulting from low self-esteem are converted into anger and aggression to allay a sense of anxiety and fearfulness (Collins et al., 1986).

Another understanding of domestic violence, according to the Department of Health & Social Services (1995), is that domestic violence is an abuse of human rights. It is a serious and pervasive problem that cannot be tolerated in a civilized society. The behavior of perpetrators must be challenged and, where appropriate, dealt with through the criminal justice system. The view is still too common that it is acceptable for a man to abuse his wife or partner, or that if he does, it is her own fault (Department of Health & Social Services, 1995). Men's possessiveness and jealousy, expectations concerning domestic work and resources, men's sense of the right to punish "their" women for perceived wrongdoing, and the importance to men of maintaining their power and authority seem to be the four general themes of domestic violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1998).

Domestic violence is unique in that it occurs in the context of people's own homes; a reality that is deeply threatening to anyone involved in an intimate relationship living in a highly patriarchal and/or closed society. Domestic violence challenges the most fundamental assumptions about the nature of intimate relations and the safety of family life. By seeing such abuse as 'private,' we affirm it as a problem that is individual, that only involves a particular relationship, and for which there is no social responsibility to remedy (McWilliams & Spence, 1996). Most researchers agree that men most frequently perpetrate domestic violence, that it is intentional, and that it involves force and coercion (McWilliams & Spence, p.3). Despite how much we would like to believe in democratic and non-violent marriages, the data provided here serve as a

reminder that for many women and children the home can be a very dangerous place (McWilliams & Spence, p.106).

Background literature on Northern Ireland

Even in countries that have experienced great civil upheavals from state-sponsored violence, whether wars against enemies in other cultures or countries from religious, social, political, or economic differences, the social norms must be carefully analyzed when trying to understand the common themes of violence against women (Walker, 1999). In Northern Ireland, while traditional attitudes have prevented women from changing or influencing the social order, it has been patriarchal ideology that has rationalized and legitimized the subordinate position of women (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993). As a result of the traditional attitudes toward marriage and the family in Northern Ireland and the difficulties in getting help, the reaction for many women has been to keep violence hidden in the home (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993). Abusers assume that the right to use force exists to provide the ultimate support for the existing power structure of the family when persons in the hierarchy refuse to accept their place and roles (Resick & Reese, 1986).

A survey of 127 women living in refuges in Northern Ireland found that 60% reported violence and abuse during pregnancy, 13% lost babies as a result, and 22% reported threats to their safety and that of their babies. On average, male partners threaten or assault two women every day in Northern Ireland (Department of Economic Development, 1999). Strong cultural traditions tying women to small communities with

few resources, state-sponsored conflicts, and greater acceptance of gender inequities all contribute to the greater risk for a woman to be battered in her home (Walker, 1999). Research shows that the decision to resort to violence in disputes with spouses has been found to be associated with such features of marital relationships as the economic subordination of wives and their difficulty in obtaining a divorce (Baumgartner; as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993).

Another significant dimension in the Northern Ireland conflict is the problem women face when living in a rigidly patriarchal society that is armed. The interaction of militarism and masculinity in Northern Ireland means that there is a much wider tendency to use or threaten to use, guns to control women in the domestic setting (McWilliams; as cited in Dobash & Dobash, 1998). A recent example of the continued patriarchal order was a 2000 sportscaster suggesting to a call-in-listener that the man's wife deserved "to see the back of his hand" for neglecting to record a football match (Ms. A, 2001).

In 1993, there were 24 non-terrorist homicides in Northern Ireland: 7 of these committed by the victims' partners or former partners and 4 by other relatives (Department of Health & Social Services, 1995). Research suggests that factors specific to Northern Ireland, such as the availability of firearms and the particular role of the police, can cause additional difficulties for victims of domestic violence. According to McWilliams and Spence (1996), legally and illegally held guns add another dimension to the threat of domestic violence in Northern Ireland. In fact, a few women reported that the police refused to remove their husband's guns from their homes.

When women went to clergy for advice or support, an equal number of women were given advice to leave the relationship as were told to stay and try to make it work. Some Catholic women were assisted by supportive priests, but most had particular difficulty because of the Catholic Church's opposition to divorce and remarriage (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993). As McWilliams & McKiernan have shown, when their position in the family is challenged, men look to, and receive from the church, affirmation of the moral authority they expect as husband/father in the family. Attitudes in Northern Ireland are conservative on issues such as premarital sexual relationships, abortion, and divorce. In fact, according to McWilliams & McKiernan (1993), women were more opposed than men to further liberalization of divorce. The women also said that there were stigmas against lone parent families, separated and divorced women, women who had been victims or domestic violence, and women who had lost custody of their children (p.53).

Attitudes reflecting the notion of privatized family and a rejection of outside interference were very common in Northern Ireland; this attitude was a definite limitation on women's ability to go to professional agencies for support (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993). A huge problem reported by women in Northern Ireland is their perceived inability to go to the police about domestic violence. One woman said, "the police won't answer calls, the RUC thinks they are being set up" (p.55). McWilliams & McKiernan (1993) documented a woman who was upset about what the neighbors would say when the police helicopter landed in a field to answer to her call. Sadly, when a woman is the target of a sectarian murder in Northern Ireland, invariably there is a great

sense of outrage. However, when a woman has been murdered in a "domestic" assault in the "sanctuary" of her own home, there is less of a sense of violation (McWilliams; as cited in Dobash & Dobash, 1998).

The protection of women from violence, particularly where it is ongoing or likely to be repeated as in domestic violence, is closely linked to the provision of services to support and assist women (Department of Economic Development, 1999). Because of the private nature of the relationships within which domestic violence occurs many perpetrators are unlikely to come to the attention of the police. Baumgartner's research (as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993) reiterates this point when he theorizes that as the degree of support available to the wife increases, the likelihood of violence against her decreases. This is a function of both the number of allies that she is able to attract and the nature of the support that these people are willing to give her. Social support can provide an embattled spouse with economic leverage in a marital relationship, an opportunity to escape an unhappy marriage, a champion who will counter violence with protection, or a mediator who will seek to secure peace on his or her behalf (Baumgartner, 227). However, "most of the research on aggression demonstrates that violence begets more violence...Power and control needs are always evident in domestic violence, and any intervention must take them into account" (Walker, 1995).

Although common to many rural families outside of Northern Ireland, rural women within Northern Ireland face the aforementioned problems, as well as additional obstacles for receiving help. Because of the scarcity of support networks outside the extended family, the family circle loomed larger, both as temporary support for women,

but also as pressure on the women to maintain their marriage (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993). Traditional community attitudes in rural areas, lack of local resources, limited access to transport, and inadequate housing provision increase the impediments for women in Northern Ireland (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993). In seeking to improve services to victims and their families, it is recognized that for many women, recourse to a shelter is neither possible nor desired. Government departments, through the Forum on Domestic Violence, will therefore seek to strengthen the range of services that can support victims in their homes or communities (Department of Health & Social Services, 1995).

Minority women in Northern Ireland face racism alongside the host of problems urban and rural women face as well. One poignant issue is the need to recognize that within a seemingly homogeneous society (e.g., predominantly Christian, Caucasian, and English speaking), there exists more than just two traditions in Northern Ireland. Provision of services based on the assumption that clients are settled and English-speaking is yet another problem faced by women from other cultures (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993). Domestic violence transcends class, culture, and country and, unfortunately, it is a growing problem within Northern Ireland, a problem that is not being addressed adequately by the civil or criminal justice systems (Lutton, 2000). Resistance to change from the police and law enforcement, the judicial system, the health and social services system, and organized religion, many of whom view the home as sacrosanct, all serve to condone and maybe even facilitate continued abuse in the family (Walker, 1999).

Lutton (2000) asserts that there are social service agencies with expertise in supporting victims of domestic violence, but they alone cannot protect women and children, as well as raise awareness to the extent of the problem. One of the first things professionals need to recognize is that to even name the problem, let alone seek help for it, is a major issue, particularly in the context of Northern Ireland (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993).

The Department of Health & Social Services (1995) acknowledges that cultural factors, including social and religious attitudes towards marriage and divorce, can prevent or impede help-seeking. McWilliams & McKiernan (1993) support the hypothesis that marriage and the family network have a central importance to women's lives in Northern Ireland and the social and religious attitudes that stigmatize lone parents are barriers which women must overcome before they step onto the help-seeking ladder.

Background literature on victims of domestic violence

The marital relationship is one in which women carry out scores of domestic duties deemed to be their responsibility and men have the right to oversee, direct, and judge this work (Dobash & Dobash, 1998). Women living with violent men may be punished for their failure to anticipate, interpret, and fulfill men's physical, emotional, and sexual needs (Dobash & Dobash, 146). Where women fail to perform what are perceived as their duties in the area of domestic and sexual services, they can be severely at risk of physical abuse (McWilliams & Spence, 1996). Some men do articulate what they want to obtain through the use of violence. To these men, violence is functional, is

meant to achieve a specific goal, and is often successful, even though other costs may be incurred (Dobash & Dobash, 1998).

Recognizing that women incur risk of severe violence at separation necessitates action to guarantee their safety. The coercive use of such violence and threats implies more. Men threaten and use violence to constrain women's options and continued failure to acknowledge this constitutes a denial of a woman's entitlement to autonomy (McWilliams & Spence, 1996). Dobash & Dobash (1998) show how women who have left relationships require greater protection and safety, particularly since the threat of leaving the relationship can in itself cause an escalation in the level of life threatening assaults. The effects of violence on women's lives will not be fully understood until the question of the extent to which coercive violence serves the interests of its perpetrators is addressed (McWilliams & Spence, 1996).

Most women who are repeatedly abused need intervention to assist them in recovery and getting on with their lives. Like rape victims and incest survivors who develop definite fear responses such as agoraphobia, panic disorders, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorders, battered women and batterers need a variety of treatment options available to them, including cognitive-behavioral, psychoeducational, and survivor therapy (Walker, 1995). Fundamental to the response to anyone who has experienced domestic violence are respect for the individual and the safeguarding of the person's rights including: dignity, freedom of choice, privacy, and desire for confidentiality (McWilliams & Spence, 1996).

Cordova et al. (1993) acknowledge that the behavior of the victims of domestic violence does not suggest passivity, docility, or surrender. Although victims are being beaten, some women are not being beaten into submission. They are standing up to, rather than surrendering to, their battering partners. One researcher suggested that women in abusive relationships often match or exceed the level of their husband's verbal aggression, with one suggested goal being to bring on the violence so as to put an end to the protracted tension (Cordova et al., 1993). Walker (1995) suggests that data from clinicians and forensic psychologists suggest that there are identifiable differences between those women who use aggressive behavior as a resource and those who use it as a defensive strategy. However, aggressive behavior in battered women does not negate these women's status as victims of domestic violence. In fact, McWilliams & McKiernan (1993) found that women adopted many different methods to cope with or stop the violence, whilst continuing to try to make a success of the relationship. Several women fought back verbally or physically, at least in the early stages of the violence, but most found that that only made the violence worse.

It is not a simple matter of the husbands, as opposed to the wives, taking on the demanding role. Rather, both play the role at different times. This could provide the seeds for a great deal of conflict and suggests the potential for numerous power struggles (Babcock et al., 1993). It is often difficult to measure the seriousness of an abusive relationship because of the following factors: the complex interaction between the intentional acts and the resulting violence and injuries; the context within which the violence occurs; and the women's current and historical physical and mental state.

Women's descriptions of batterers and battering incidents may be influenced by their own psychological reactions to their partners' abuse, not just by the violent acts themselves (Walker, 1995). However, it should be said that women have been found to be more likely to blame themselves while they were in the relationship than after they had left and to make unstable or behavioral attributions, blaming some modifiable aspect of their behavior rather than their character when they do blame themselves (Cantos et al., 1993).

According to McWilliams (as cited in Dobash & Dobash, 1998) marital rape, which is common in many conflictual societies including Northern Ireland, is repetitive and brutal, used to assert authority, and can force a woman to flee her home and community. McWilliams & McKiernan (1993) noticed that marital rape was one of the problems that women were most reluctant to disclose in their research. They often found that women told about the rapes with great difficulty or included this point almost as an afterthought. An abused woman with few resources or access to employment may perceive her alternatives inside the marriage as being more rewarding and less costly than alternatives outside. In such cases, a woman's economic needs take precedence over her physical and emotional needs to be free from abuse (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993).

Women who challenged the traditional patriarchal male attitudes by going to work or gaining education met with abuse. One woman said that the violence started when she started working as a secretary for a community organization. Another found things got worse when she went back to university (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993). In fact, McWilliams & McKiernan found that many women have lost their confidence

through years of violence and found it difficult to make new friends and to join new groups.

Background literature on connection between domestic violence and social conflict

Domestic violence is clearly a major social problem and one that needs urgent attention. If violence in the home were limited or altogether prevented, SIT may not be able to address fully the religious and political initiatives of the social conflict, but it would be a significant step toward understanding violence in society in Northern Ireland (McWilliams & Spence, 1996). If violence is seen as intentional acts undertaken in order to achieve ends that are deeply embedded in the circumstances of daily life, it becomes an issue for all of us, it may affect anyone, and is about daily life (Dobash & Dobash, 1998).

Studies show that when one form of violence is found in the family, other forms are more likely to occur and that violence in the family has a direct relationship to community violence and other forms of aggression and gender-based violence (Walker, 1999). The difficulties that women have encountered in making domestic violence more public are partly, though not entirely, the consequence of the lack of resources, lack of funding, and public indifference to "private matters" that are largely affiliated with perpetual political conflict. Police resources, for example, are almost entirely taken up with combating paramilitary activity, and media attention is similarly focused on the political situation rather than on issues inside the home (McWilliams; as cited in Dobash & Dobash, 1998).

Babcock et al. (1993) suggest that historically, it was considered a necessary aspect of a husband's marital obligation to control and chastise his wife through the use of physical force. The appropriation of women's bodies as a symbol of "victorious conquest," is a common theme in the literature on violence against women in war or other situations of conflict (McWilliams; as cited in Dobash & Dobash, 1998). This situation could be applied to a man in Northern Ireland being frustrated or jubilated by his role in the social conflict and as his own reward, demanding sexual gratification from his significant other.

It is women's added vulnerability to rape and sexual abuse in times of conflict that is the most common theme to emerge from the available literature on forms of violence perpetrated on women (Dobash & Dobash, 1998). One researcher found that women felt particularly threatened and endangered by repeated sexual assault. Feelings of shame and degradation prevent victims from talking about this kind of abuse. Moreover, many women do not define forceful sexual assaults as abusive if they are perpetrated by their husbands (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993).

In an important sense, domestic violence does not occur unless the social context in which family members find themselves encourages or allows it (Baumgartner; as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993). The violence of the Troubles has overshadowed other forms of violence and affected attitudes of the police and legal community. It is vital to understand the consequences of the Troubles and the damage done to the community and its value system in order to understand Northern Ireland's subculture of violence. According to the Department of Economic Development (1999), there is inevitably a

connection between acceptance and tolerance of violent and coercive behavior in public and its existence in the home (Department of Economic Development, 1999).

Actions are interpreted and evaluated very differently depending on the social context or, more precisely, depending on the social relationship between the participants (Mummendey & Otten; as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993). Domestic violence is bred of many interactions, not just the one that transpires between the perpetrator and victim. What is true of domestic violence may be true of other kinds of violence as well, wherever it occurs in human groups (Baumgartner; as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993). Unless the two feuding individuals live in utter isolation, their behavior cannot be fully explained with reference to the many other people with whom they regularly interact. Violence between two people appears to arise not only from features of their own relationship but also from the nature of the larger social environment in which they are contained (Baumgartner; as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993).

Although the immediate cause of family violence is the uncontrollable anger of their perpetrators, the alarming appearance of such destructive behavior across the social classes can be better understood by examining the sociocultural matrix that facilitates its occurrence (Levine, 1986). Several authors contend that physical aggression within the home is found more frequently when there is a subculture of violence, a lack of economic resources, and a lower occupational and educational status (Resick & Reese, 1986). Although the societal patriarchy may be the bedrock of husband-to-wife aggression, it remains unclear why some men use violence against their wives and other men brought up amid the same societal pressures do not (Babcock et al., 1993).

Need for the study

The type of research undertaken by this study is necessary because of the strikingly inadequate amount of research into the connection between violence in the home and broader social violence. There are numerous books on the historical social conflict in Northern Ireland that postulate a distinct political or psychological reason for conflict. Likewise there are many books related to the psychological cause for domestic violence but few specialize in Northern Ireland. Due to the limited understanding of aggressive behavior, the research that does exist cannot, with any degree of certainty, consider social violence and domestic violence aggressive phenomena that are inherently related—a reality that leaves even the most astute researcher to draw inferences. Perhaps they are connected, perhaps they are not, but it seems unlikely that conflict will be eradicated in Northern Ireland without further exploration of this issue.

Lacking any research that qualitatively or quantitatively connects or disconnects aggressive phenomena in Northern Ireland, scholars, students, and policy-makers are unable to support social or political development on any issue that is not completely understood. Moreover, it seems that a connection or disconnection may be helpful information for various disciplines: (a) public and private support agencies/refuges trying to understand where their help is needed most; (b) sociologists trying to further understand conflict in Northern Ireland; (c) criminologists seeking patterns of behavior and areas high in crime; (d) political scientists seeking to implement social policy; (e) politicians voting on legislation to protect citizens in their homes as well as on their streets.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research

Quantitative methods are supported by the *positivist* paradigm, which characterizes the world as made up of observable, measurable facts. Positivists assume a fixed, measurable reality exists external to people. In contrast, qualitative methods are generally supported by the *constructivist* paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing (Glesne, 1999). Qualitative research introduces the concept of *triangulation*, or the process of using multiple data-collection methods to counteract and compliment validity issues found in each. Simply put, multiple research methods can be used to overlap one another in an effort to observe, understand, and hopefully validate the same phenomenon using a variety of techniques. Three research techniques were used to collect data and add to the richness and legitimacy of the findings, they include: interviews, principal observation & interaction, and literature research. The differences between Positivist and Constructivist paradigms are summarized in Figure 3.1 on page 73:

POSITIVIST MODE	CONSTRUCTIVIST MODE
ASSUMPTIONS	
• Social facts have an objective reality	• Reality is socially constructed
• Variable can be identified and measured	• Variables are complex and interwoven
RESEARCH PURPOSES	
• Generalizability	• Contextualization
• Causal Explanations	• Understanding
• Prediction	• Interpretation
RESEARCH APPROACH	
• Begins with hypotheses and theory	• May result in hypothesis and theory
• Uses formal instruments	• Researcher as instrument
• Experimental	• Naturalistic
• Deductive	• Inductive
• Component analysis	• Searches for patterns
• Seeks the norm	• Seeks pluralism, complexity
• Reduces data to numerical indices	• Makes minor use of numerical indices
• Uses abstract language in write-up	• Descriptive write-up
RESEARCHER ROLE	
• Detachment	• Personal involvement
• Objective portrayal	• Empathetic understanding

Source: (Glesne, 1999: 6)

The motivation for conducting research on Northern Ireland was not to find a distinct quantifiable correlation that was statistically significant, but merely to seek insights into social and domestic violence. Traditional quantitative research methods and statistical correlations were not used for two reasons: (a) By nature, human beings are dynamic and complex organisms that can seldom be categorized or indexed in the context of emotions and psychological disposition; (b) Domestic violence is a very delicate and sometimes humiliating experience for both victims and perpetrators. Given the sensitivity of this issue, it would have been insensitive, invasive, and inappropriate to interview support workers or victims of domestic violence using a predetermined list of questions, without allowing them to explain their perception of the issue in their own words, from their own perspective, and in a comfortable informal setting.

A qualitative approach to this research allowed for an exploration of a connection between two seemingly unrelated forms of aggressive behavior. The undefined and unsystematic way in which the qualitative approach was used in this study, combined with the experience of 'sitting' in another culture, also allowed for the development of many topics and questions to which this IPA is unable to speak. As the paradigm suggests, a qualitative approach allowed the most helpful information to emerge through the triangulation of the interviews, observations & interactions, and the literature research. The research technique was able to help refine the collected data and some fundamental assumptions about Northern Ireland and domestic violence, into six specific areas, which constitute the most relevant material for this IPA. It should be noted that the nature of qualitative research, while producing many answers, also tends to create a

plethora of additional questions for further research. These questions are addressed in the 'Questions Requiring Further Research' section on page 117.

Study Design

A descriptive study design was used for its ability to document the research process and detail relevant findings in descriptive rather than analytical terms. Because the literature research on this topic was relatively thin, formal interviews of social service workers in Northern Ireland, sustained contact with women's shelters in the Republic of Ireland, and the observations and interactions taken from being engulfed in a foreign culture, were used to supplement the literature and gain a basic understanding of the problem. Literature on domestic violence exposed the relevant issues related to domestic violence, informed the interviews, and offered a context for what might be encountered in the interviews or in Northern Ireland. The literature was also used to identify a vague outline of causal factors. A re-examination of the literature upon returning from Northern Ireland was then used to locate similarities and dissimilarities between what had been identified in previous research and what was found in the observations and interactions in Belfast.

Admittedly, the interview portion of the research process proved logistically difficult, as few contacts had been made with anyone asking these questions, or working in sectors that dealt with domestic violence in Northern Ireland. Internet research proved invaluable in providing names of organizations dealing with domestic violence in Belfast. Internet research also provided names of certain employees of women's shelters in

Belfast and the Republic of Ireland, which allowed for initial contacts to be made via email—an uncharacteristic approach that ultimately led to person-to-person interviews in Belfast and an "e-interview" with a women's organization in Dublin. These interviews provided crucial information and a wealth of literature that focused specifically on domestic violence in Northern Ireland.

After transcribing the interviews and reading the considerable amount of additional literature provided, certain factors that differed in domestic violence cases in Northern Ireland from those of American case studies were identified. From the realization that domestic violence did not completely transcend cultures, the focus was narrowed to exclude factors not specific to Northern Ireland. After causal factors specific to Northern Ireland had been identified, a re-examination of the original literature, based on what was found in Belfast and the additional literature, was necessary to narrow the scope of relevant information.

Regrettably, time spent in Northern Ireland was limited—an unfortunate circumstance that ultimately produced a narrower sample than was desired. However, the observations and interactions in Belfast, combined with formal and informal interviews and additional literature, provided a solid basis for this preliminary study of causal factors of domestic violence. The qualitative research process was also instrumental in identifying numerous areas of further study. Furthermore, it must be re-stated, that having a male conduct interviews in a foreign culture about a sensitive, predominantly female, topic will have implications on both the candidness of the participants and the content of the interviews. While the type of implications and the magnitude of their

presence cannot be fully understood, it should be noted that the nature of the research and the researcher inevitably had implications on the information provided.

Methods of Data Collection

Literature. Causal factors and predispositions for violence were identified in the literature, and their relationship to social influences was explored previous to traveling to Northern Ireland. However, a re-examination of the literature upon return from Northern Ireland also helped narrow the focus of this study and legitimize previous research by identifying relevant and irrelevant causal factors for domestic violence or social conflict.

The literature was instrumental in teaching the history and background of social conflict in Northern Ireland. The literature helped inform the difference between a Nationalist and a Unionist and the impetus for their conflict; personal accounts of domestic violence in Northern Ireland were included; judgments about the inability of the criminal justice system to protect victims were made; and government studies that outlined social and political initiatives for combating domestic violence were contributed. Furthermore, the literature advanced many theories about specific factors that contribute to the use of violence to resolve conflict. The literature also detailed the role of power, control, domination, and ontological needs and outlined how these factors relate to aggression, coercion, identity, and rationality.

Interviews. The interviews were conducted at the headquarters of the Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The interview format was relaxed and informal and seen as a conversation rather than a formal interview. The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. Informed consent was provided to participants in the interviews and permission to reproduce the interviews was granted under the condition of anonymity. Given this condition, the participants in the interviews will heretofore be referred to as Ms. A, Ms. B, Source C, Mr. D, Ms. E, and Source F. These participants, their roles, and the relevance of their information will be explained further in the 'Results' section. The interview questions consisted of both fixed and open-ended questions that were used as simple guidelines for conversation. The areas of inquiry were designed to gain insight into society, the role of religion and politics in Northern Ireland, experience with domestic abuse, and social predispositions for violence.

Traveling to Northern Ireland offered an invaluable opportunity to be surrounded by the culture and research basic questions that had surfaced from the literature regarding Irish culture, social conflict, and domestic violence. Employees of women's shelters were extremely helpful in finding participants as the research consisted of interviewing employees of women's shelters. Ms. A was able to participate in an interview and arrange an interview with Ms. B, the director of the women's shelter for an additional perspective. Not only was Ms. A instrumental in helping arrange interviews in Northern Ireland, she was able to provide me with numerous information packets and useful literature including *Bringing it out in the open; Domestic violence in Northern Ireland*

and *Taking Domestic Violence Seriously*, two studies conducted by Monica McWilliams et al. that have significantly affected and informed the Northern Irish government's policies on domestic violence.

Observations & Interactions. Visiting pubs and attending parks, plays, shopping malls, and other social environments was a common form of observation. Recording observations with an audio recorder and taking mental notes about interactions between young children, groups of boys, groups of girls, and young and old couples, helped relate the research to specific experiences. Having conversations with various people in these environments and asking questions about topics relevant to this study was another helpful way of understanding what was found in the literature.

However, until traveling to Northern Ireland, various cultural nuances, the complexity of the conflict, the fanaticism with which it is perpetuated, or the explosiveness of a topic like social conflict or domestic violence could not possibly have begun to be understood. Northern Ireland allowed for opportunities to listen to the stories and experiences of the conflict from the perspective of taxi cab drivers, bartenders, lounge singers, soccer fans, university students, refuge workers, and social service agents—each of which offered unique perspective into aggressive behavior and its impetus.

In Northern Ireland (and in qualitative research in general), the researcher often becomes the research instrument. It was not until walking the streets of Belfast, talking to residents, and experiencing the reality of Northern Ireland, that the vastness and

omnipresence of intractable conflict could be understood. Until experiencing Belfast, one could not understand the complexity of one form of violence in Northern Ireland, let alone two forms of violence and whether or not they are related. Glesne (1999) refers to qualitative research as a "dot-to-dot exercise where one dot of information leads to another, and in the end, a pattern begins to emerge." My observations and interactions in Northern Ireland provided me with dots of information, directions to research, and a basic understanding of relevant vs. irrelevant issues. Although sufficient 'dots of information' were never identified to create a conclusive pattern of causal factors for domestic violence, the dots that did emerge from traveling to Belfast were enough to create a vague outline of causal factors and perhaps more importantly, could be used to inform further research projects. The information acquired in Northern Ireland lent invaluable insight to this IPA and will ultimately add intellectual depth and richness to this project.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Discussion

Results

This section reports the results from six interviews that were conducted in and around Belfast, Northern Ireland from November 2 to November 15, 2001. Two of the interviews were conducted in formal settings at victimized women's shelters, audio recorded, and transcribed, one of the interviews occurred via email and included perspectives from three support service members of a victimized women's shelter, and the remaining three were interactions or informal interviews with people that had an opinion and were willing to talk about life, politics, and violence in Belfast. The information gained from the three informal interviews was scribbled on note pads or napkins and later audio recorded.

Ms. A and Ms. B work at a well known victimized women's shelter and were the two participants of formal interviews. They have both allowed me to quote them directly under the condition of anonymity. "Source C" refers to three women who are also employees of a victimized women's shelter, whose interview was conducted via email, and who have also requested anonymity. Mr. D refers to a taxi cab driver that gave me a 3-hour "political tour" of North and West Belfast and was extremely candid about both social and domestic violence in Northern Ireland. Ms. E refers to a pub singer who so graciously sacrificed her 30-minute break on consecutive nights to give me her unique perspective on social violence in Northern Ireland. "Source F" refers to two Queens

University students who, although raised in other sections of Northern Ireland, had spent significant time in Belfast while attending university, and were willing to share with a fellow university student their thoughts and feelings on social conflict and domestic violence in Northern Ireland.

Characteristic of a qualitative method of research, each of the interviews took its own distinct shape as a result of the context in which it occurred. It was explicitly stated at the beginning of all interviews that although information given would be helpful in proving or disproving the hypothesis of this IPA, a conversation format was desired, and any confidentiality requirement or discomfort with the interview questions, would be respected. While many different questions were asked to all of the interview participants throughout the course of the respective conversations, six areas of inquiry, identified through various sources, were used to delicately guide the interviews and subtly draw out relevant information.

The six areas of inquiry included: (a) *prevalence of alcohol consumption*: a contributor to domestic violence and social conflict that was cited frequently throughout the literature (b) *social trends during intense social conflict*: a test of the basic hypothesis of this IPA (c) *common patterns or triggers that lead to domestic violence*: an area of inquiry cited in much of the literature but still in need of significant development (d) *possibility of divorce for victims*: an area of inquiry that emerged in the first formal interview and included in subsequent interviews because of its relevance to religious communities (e) *protection of victims from authorities*: another area of inquiry that emerged in the first interview and included in subsequent interviews due to its specific

relevance to Northern Ireland (f) *traditional gender roles*: cited in much of the literature as a cause for the legitimization of domestic violence in Northern Ireland. From the interviews it was possible to become somewhat familiar with the culture of Northern Ireland and from these basic themes, the data that seemed to be the most relevant and helpful with regard to the subject of this IPA was documented.

Prevalence of alcohol consumption. Ms. A reported that alcohol consumption "exacerbates a potentially abusive situation" and although a more serious injury may occur as a result of alcohol, alcohol is not an excuse for domestic violence. Ms. B reported likewise that while alcohol can be a factor it cannot be considered a "cause" of domestic violence. She also reported that in Northern Ireland, large consumption of alcohol is normal and that the "climate inside and outside of pubs, would sometimes be quite violent." Ms. B also noted that a "violent sub-culture" exists in communities that consistently consume large amounts of alcohol. Source C reported that alcohol is also not a cause of domestic violence, but it can increase the level or magnitude of an abusive situation.

Mr. D reported that "everyone" in Ireland drinks alcohol and that it makes no difference whether an abuser is drunk or sober if the person is violently inclined. Ms. E reported that, on a nightly basis, she witnesses many drunken people, not all of which return home to abuse their partners. She also reported rumors of men she had heard were abusive, who never drank alcohol. Source F reported that alcohol was a poor determinant

of domestically violent people because it is "all around you" in Northern Ireland and some people drink and some do not, while some people abuse and some do not.

Social trends during social violence. Ms. A reported that during times of particularly intense social violence the number of phone calls received remains consistent with times of cease-fire or social stagnancy. Ms. B reported that social violence provokes a lot of fear and anxiety within society, and although many employees expect an increase in domestic violence after a cease-fire, it never occurs. Ms. B also reported that after a cease-fire, police training increases and record keeping becomes more accurate due to the increase in available resources used to address domestic violence. Source C also reported that, from their experience, social violence and domestic violence operate independently of one another.

Mr. D reported that domestic violence is never addressed during intense social conflict because society is generally preoccupied with the social violence. Ms. E reported that additional police/military presence following intense social conflict might temporarily decrease levels of domestic violence. Source F reported that a relationship between social violence and domestic violence had not previously occurred to them.

Common factors leading to domestic violence. Ms. A reported that due to additional financial pressure, greater consumption of alcohol, and post-holiday stress, victimized women's shelters are particularly busy during holiday seasons. She also reported that incidents of domestic violence are not increasing but that an increase in

accurately recorded statistics within the last five years is creating a façade of a domestic violence epidemic in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, Ms. A reported that according to their statistics, domestic violence happens to "just an many Catholics as Protestants." Ms. B reported that she did not think that violence in Northern Ireland increases according to patterns because from her experience, it "always fluctuates so randomly." Source C reported that indeed patterns and/or common themes do exist for domestic violence, but neglected to elaborate on what patterns they found.

Mr. D reported that social violence causes anxiety, the ever-changing political atmosphere causes frustration, and religious pressures cause feelings of guilt. According to Mr. D, any minor dispute in the home is compounded by all of these factors and could combine to cause increased levels of domestic violence. Ms. E reported that, from her perspective, domestic violence occurs randomly. She also noted that within Belfast some well known, seemingly polite and respectable people have been found to be abusing their spouses. She concluded that if these people could "get away with" domestic violence, anyone could. Source F noted a contradiction in the terms "pattern" and "trigger." The former suggesting an ability to be predicted, the latter suggesting a random explosion of violence. Despite the contradiction, Source F reported that neither domestic violence nor social conflict can be predicted. Based on their experience, Source F concluded that both types of violence must be randomly perpetrated.

Possibility of divorce. Ms. A reported that divorce is an option in Northern Ireland but within the large Catholic community, it is a very rare option. She also noted

that divorce is becoming more and more popular in situations of domestic violence but still only affects approximately 1% of the population of Northern Ireland. Ms. B reported that getting a divorce is "quite easy" in Northern Ireland. However, she reported that before the very early stages of legislation on divorce in the 1980s, women would have indeed experienced difficulty in the divorce courts. Ms. B also noted that while the Republic of Ireland has a long-standing ban on divorce, Northern Ireland does not, but that women in the Catholic population would not see divorce as a viable option. Source C reported that divorce is an option for women in the Republic of Ireland and women in Northern Ireland but that it is not easily achieved.

Mr. D reported that women seeking a divorce from abusive husbands have a very difficult time achieving it. He reported that it is not uncommon for a divorce in Northern Ireland to take three years to become final in the court system. Ms. E reported that divorces simply did not happen in Northern Ireland. She noted that society attaches a stigma of incompetence to divorced women as if divorced women are weak and unable to "mind their affairs in the home." Source F reported that for women in the Protestant community, divorce is an option that is used frequently in abusive situations. Source F stated that although a legal 'divorce' was very rare in the Catholic community, a "judicial separation" is a provision made for Catholic women seeking protection from abusive partners. According to Source F, a judicial separation provides the protection of a divorce by having a legal body recognize that a couple is separated, while also providing religious protection in not breaking a Holy Sacrament.

Role of authorities. Ms. A reported that the police have "taken on" the issue of domestic violence and are quite proactive in raising community awareness and helping prevent domestic violence. She states that a police-led initiative has helped get domestic violence to a place where it is no longer a taboo subject. Ms. B reported that there are simply not enough police to enforce laws against domestic violence. She noted that with limited government funding, there are only a certain number of police personnel, and that "they cannot be everywhere at once." Source C reported that most of society cares little about the plight of abused women and that law enforcement agencies and prosecutors of perpetrators are completely inadequate. Source C also reported that it is not always easy for women to take action and approach the police force due to a fear of escalating the violence in her home.

Mr. D reported that the authorities are preoccupied with trying to end the "civil war" between Unionists and Loyalists and restore some peace to the communities. He noted that undertaking a task of this magnitude "obviously" takes away from other areas of law enforcement. Ms. E reported that hiring more police officers would help decrease levels of domestic violence but, until that step is taken, many crimes including domestic violence will go unpunished. Source F reported that pamphlets, brochures, and advertisements for victimized women's shelters can be seen all over Northern Ireland, most of which are shelter-sponsored initiatives and none of which are sponsored by law enforcement agencies. Source F concluded that law enforcement agencies cannot help with social problems because they are preoccupied with the war "that continues to rage in the poorer sections of Belfast."

Traditional gender roles. Ms. A reported that traditional gender roles of "father-provider" and "mother-homemaker" are changing rapidly in the better educated and wealthier communities that are able to send many women to a university or college. Ms. A also noted that domestic violence is a "power and control thing," that allows men to dominate their subordinate women. Ms. A stated that women are the main victims of domestic violence because of the female role in society and because of that "whole power and control thing that has been going on since day one between men and women." Ms. B reported that the language and culture of Northern Ireland perpetuates subordinate women and violent men. Source C reported that women have always been and still are considered subordinate figures in society. Source C elected not to expand on this analysis of society in Northern Ireland.

Mr. D reported that men are stereotyped in Northern Ireland but nonetheless have a reputation as "master" and "breadwinner" to uphold. He also stated that in the last four or five years, women's organizations have been "brilliant" in making themselves recognizable throughout society. Mr. D concluded that these initiatives would help eventually transform traditional gender roles. Ms. E reported that if a woman works, when she arrives home, she is still expected to maintain her role as cook, maid, and servant to her husband. Ms. E also noted that there are only certain positions available to women seeking employment, and that most of the well-paid jobs are still dominated by men. Source F reported that within the ranks of the university, traditional roles have almost completely deteriorated. Source F also noted that most of their female classmates

would not subject themselves to domestic circumstances where they were expected to become servants for their partners.

Discussion

The findings in this section are the result of a combination of researching literature, interviewing social service employees in Belfast, informal interactions with people in Northern Ireland, and the experience of visiting Northern Ireland. They are divided into distinct sections for the sake of clarity, but it is important to note that they are byproducts of the entire qualitative research experience. Some findings were suggested in the literature but were only included after being strongly supported in informal settings and interviews. Some findings were present in every facet of the research process and were obviously too relevant to omit. While other findings are included due to their absence in other forms of research and should be explored further. Nevertheless, the findings included in this section revolve around the six basic themes or, areas of inquiry, which became apparent throughout the research process and are listed in the previous section.

The prevalence of alcohol in Northern Ireland, the existence of common factors leading to domestic violence, and the existence of traditional gender roles in Northern Ireland had been identified in the literature previous to any of the formal interviews. These themes made up the basic structure around which the formal interviews would revolve as they had been highlighted consistently throughout the literature.

Findings from the literature

Prevalence of alcohol. As part of a 3-year study of criminal-justice-based programs for violent men, Dobash & Dobash (1998) interviewed 95 couples that had been involved in some degree of domestic violence. Their findings suggest that the excessive use of alcohol is a unique source of conflict in itself and that it exacerbates other problems within the home. Participant #58 is quoted as saying, "If I was to stop drinking, [she] would never have a black eye. It's only been with alcohol, that's all it is" (p.149). Participant #62 admittedly used alcohol to control the mobility of his wife by purposely getting drunk while he was expected to be watching children, on the evening that he knew his wife was planning a 'girls-night-out' with her friends, thereby obligating her to cancel her plans and stay home.

Bergman & Brismar (as cited in McKiernan & McWilliams; 1993) conducted a study of 18 batterers who had been remanded in custody and found that 50% of these men had drunk excessive amounts of alcohol before beating their partners. McKiernan & McWilliams (1993) realize that alcohol can be used to excuse an abuser's violent behavior, but that even drunk men are making choices and should be held responsible for their behavior. They submit "careful evaluation of [the alcohol argument] is particularly relevant in the Northern Ireland context, where, because of a culture which purports to revolve around 'drinking,' the use of alcohol by violent men has been used frequently as an explanation for abusive behavior" (p.21).

Furthermore, in a study of 56 abusive men, conducted to explore causal factors of domestic violence, McKiernan & McWilliams (1993) found that while alcohol was cited

as a major contributory factor to domestic violence, little conclusive evidence was found. This study states that alcohol abuse was a factor in 66% of the abusive relationships, but that abuse occurred in 67% of relationships when the abusive partner had not been drinking. Put simply, for the victims of these particular relationships, the abuse occurred regardless of their abuser's level of intoxication.

However, for women whose partner's abused them when either drunk or sober, in every case, the use of alcohol was a precursor to the use of violence; the victim's knew to expect violence when their partner was drinking (McKiernan & McWilliams; 1993). In their study, McKiernan & McWilliams found that women, whose husband's used violence when drinking, also used violence with a hangover, and in between drinking bouts. The relationship of drinking and domestic violence eventually got to the point where there was no difference in the pattern of violence between drunk and sober times (p.40).

Consistent with one of the prerequisites for social interactionist theory, Dobash & Dobash (1998) demonstrated alcohol being used functionally, as a way to control one's spouse from leaving the home. This type of abuse is consistent with the notion of punishment in SIT in that it deprives the spouse of opportunities for social exchange with friends, thereby damaging her social identity. McKiernan & McWilliams (1993) unknowingly cited evidence of social interactionist theory by stating that although their experience has shown that alcohol has been present in many cases of domestic violence, abusers make choices to use violence as opposed to nonviolent forms of conflict resolution and that they should be held responsible for their choices. This is consistent

with SIT because, according to the research of McKiernan & McWilliams (1993), abusers use a "decision tree" to acknowledge their feelings of grievance, to cost their options, and to ultimately engage in aggressive or coercive action.

Patterns that might lead to domestic violence. It must be noted, that this area of inquiry is not based upon one single salient pattern that emerged from the literature. Instead, many patterns emerged from the literature that may or may not contribute to the use of violence in the home. What is relevant about the notion of common patterns leading to domestic violence is that whatever they may be (this research does not profess to know them specifically, or whether they exist at all), patterns may exist, and that if defined accurately, they could provide scholars, psychologists, and law enforcement personnel with valuable information regarding causal factors of domestic violence. Therefore, this section cites a range of sociological patterns or psychological characteristics that emerged from the literature rather than a single universal pattern that is true for all cases of domestic violence.

Dobash & Dobash (1998); Babcock et al. (2000); Daly & Wilson (as cited in Dobash & Dobash; 1998); Felson & Tedeschi (1993); and McKiernan & McWilliams (1993), found in their respective research that although men and women in conflict generally disagree about 'what' is in conflict or 'who' is at fault, many of the participants they studied agreed in their analysis of the sources of violence in their relationships. Specific sources identified these twelve factors: (a) women's domestic work (b) male jealousy (c) money (d) the man's use of alcohol (e) sex (f) male power and authority (g)

superior/subordinate attitudes about the relationship (h) alienation from wives due to infidelity or [woman's] termination of marriage (i) male unemployment (j) female pregnancy (k) saving face as a way to preserve masculinity (l) modeling behavior. According to this specific literature, although men and women differ significantly on the severity of these issues, this range of issues defines the most prevalent situational factors that lead to domestic violence.

Babcock et al. (2000); Cahn et al. (1988); Daly & Wilson (as cited in Dobash & Dobash; 1998); Walker (1999); Collins et al. (1986); and Felson & Tedeschi (1993), found patterns in their respective research of personal or psychological characteristics of abusers that, if identified correctly, may help scholars better understand the psychological impetus for abuse and individual potential for abuse. According to the literature, people susceptible to domestic abuse may engage in or demonstrate one or all of the following characteristics or psychological patterns: (a) extra-familial violence or criminal behavior (b) depression or poor self-concept (c) emotional volatility (e) borderline schizotypal personality disorders (f) alcohol or drug abuse (g) antisocial or narcissistic personality (h) suspiciousness and jealousy (i) rigid attitudes toward control and sex-role differentiation (j) lack of empathetic concern (k) maintenance of authority (l) perceived injustice.

These psychological characteristics or patterns cannot possibly explain the causal factors for every instance of domestic violence. According to my research in Northern Ireland, the causal factors of domestic violence are so broad and unrelated that comprehensible patterns have yet to be deciphered—a reality that makes it extremely difficult to draw a significant correlation. The causes of aggressive or socially deviant

behavior seem to be much more related to psychological maladjustment or dysfunction than specific sociological factors. However, the fact that numerous psychologists, criminologists, and sociologists overlap, and to some extent, agree on the causal factors for domestic violence that includes psychological *and* sociological bases, might decrease the sense of arbitrariness and randomness with which domestic violence seems to occur. The causal factors for domestic violence, as cited in the literature, reinforce the ideas put forth in social interactionist theory in that both psychological and sociological factors may be responsible for the occurrence of violence. Furthermore, SIT suggests that aggression is used to coerce a seemingly subordinate victim into a specified action, and that domestic violence may be the result of a lack of certain psychological faculties (i.e., authority, self-confidence, justice, etc.). Social interactionist theory suggests that violence is functional, situational, and biological. This notion reinforces the unpredictability of domestic violence as well as the dynamic and comprehensive nature of social interactionist theory.

Existence of traditional gender roles. Numerous sources cited the existence of rigid gender roles as one causal factor for domestic violence. Before traveling to Northern Ireland, this area of inquiry had been well documented in much of the literature on domestic violence. Only after arriving in Northern Ireland, conducting interviews, and experiencing the culture, did consistencies between gender roles from the literature and gender roles in Northern Ireland begin to show congruency. The 'Results' section outlines the findings from the interviews regarding gender roles in Northern Ireland, but

this information may only be relevant if supported by the literature. This section will briefly outline traditional attitudes regarding gender roles, and use that information to show consistencies with attitudes regarding gender roles in Northern Ireland.

In their study of 95 U.K. couples connected to domestic violence, Dobash & Dobash (1998) concluded that abusive men are particularly concerned with women servicing their personal needs, including household work and the content, preparation, and timing of meals. They found that when these needs are perceived as being neglected, criticisms and verbal confrontations can "sometimes end in violent attacks" (p.146).

The traditional roles expected from women were highlighted in a series of interviews conducted by Dobash & Dobash (all excerpts taken from pgs. 154-155). For example, participant #38, responding to a question of why he hit his wife, responded, "I was wanting to show her who was the boss." Participant #6 responding to the same question responded, "Because she knows how to wind me up, basically. Sometimes she doesn't take 'no' for an answer." Participant #63, responding to a question about what his wife could have done to prevent the violent attack, responded, "Keep her mouth shut." And when asked if he wanted to stop being violent to her, he replied, "No. She's my wife."

From their research, Dobash & Dobash (1998) found that men do describe certain emotions and orientations that directly contribute to their decision to use violence. They reported that men often describe themselves as intensely angry and blame the woman for causing, or deserving, the violent outburst. Consistent with social interactionist theory, Dobash & Dobash describe domestic violence as the result of a conscious choice. They

conclude that the evidence of masculine identity lay not in the encounter, but rather in the outcome of not letting a woman/wife win, of putting her in her place, or showing her who was boss" (p.167). Furthermore, by stating that, "...violence is used as a means of obtaining an end, as a product of men's power over women, and deeply rooted in men's sense of masculinity" (p. 164), they are reinforcing social interactionist theory's contention that violence can be used to establish one's identity, force compliance, maintain authority, or achieve a desired goal.

Babcock et al. (1993) reported that aggression may be "initiated by men who feel that they should command dyadic power and feel frustrated by their inability to command such power." According to Mummendey & Otten (as cited in Felson & Tedeschi, 1993), aggressive behavior includes the individual becoming irrational, losing consciousness of the self as an individual, and becoming less concerned with morality. Mummendey & Otten found that this type of "primitive deviant behavior" is often the result of diffusion of responsibility and feelings of increased power and invulnerability (p.152). Mummendey & Otten concluded that aggressive behavior, in this case domestic violence, is about power and control over a victim. It is about the physical, emotional, and psychological domination of a perceived subordinate figure.

An especially poignant example of traditional gender roles or expected behavior in situations of domestic violence is found in a longitudinal study conducted by Lundgren (as cited in Dobash & Dobash; 1998) in which one woman's partner accuses her of breaking the requirement of continuous access to female sexuality. He states, "When the woman goes on [sexual] strike for long periods of time, well, that's not the way to treat

your husband. And then she can't come around afterwards and expect to be treated with satin gloves, when she has committed sabotage against everything that's important to the other party" (p.186). The situation turned violent when he decided to teach her that "sabotage wouldn't do her any good" and that she "can't get away with that sort of thing" (p.187). When asked about the probability of her being in pain after a violent attack and the possibility of sexual intercourse after beating her, he states, "Of course you can [have sex], of course. I could and she could" (p.187).

Some of the examples used to describe traditional gender roles in situations of domestic violence are extreme and may not be occurring in Northern Ireland. However, considering the attitudes about gender roles from the participants in the interviews (i.e., "father-provider," "mother-homemaker," "master," "breadwinner," "maid," and "servant") and the participants' ideas of domestic violence (i.e., "power and control thing,"), certain similarities can be detected between what was found in the literature and the answers to general questions about gender roles in Belfast. These similarities should be acknowledged but need to be developed further to allow any concrete conclusions to be drawn.

From the findings listed in the previous two sections, the contention that gender roles influence domestic violence, reinforces the notion that situations of domestic violence and aggressive behavior in social interactionist theory both rely upon: (a) *maintenance of authority*: to control the behavior of one's spouse, (b) *conflict intensity*: as a result of incompatible interests or expectations, and (c) *perceived injustice*: to regain respect and authority after being insulted or treated unjustly.

Findings from the interviews

The possibility of divorce and the level of protection provided to the victims of domestic violence were themes that were noted in the first formal interview and included in subsequent interviews because of their distinctiveness and what seemed to be a lack of relevant supporting literature. It must be said, however, that after re-examining the literature for these specific themes, some supporting literature surfaced and the initial conclusion that these themes were unique to the interviews was incorrect. Additionally, the realization that these themes are supported in the literature, albeit scarcely, may have ultimately expanded the their collective validity and made a case for their status as factors that contribute significantly to domestic violence.

Possibility of divorce. During the initial literature review, the subject of divorce did not seem particularly significant or useful to the hypothesis of this IPA, and was overlooked. Throughout the course of the first interview, however, divorce began to emerge as a relevant factor in trying to understand ways of combating and/or protecting victims of domestic violence. The research shows that divorce is not very common—a conclusion that is evidenced by the contradictory statements made in Belfast—and that some religious or cultural groups consider it a sin, and explicitly discourage its practice regardless of one's domestic situation. Although limited, a re-examination of the literature produced some noteworthy findings regarding divorce in Northern Ireland.

McKiernan & McWilliams (1993) found that the most common belief regarding divorce, including the younger women involved in their study, was that marriage is

forever. They found that the most common sentiment regarding seeking a divorce from an abusive husband was, "you make your bed, you lie in it" (p.52). They also found that the most common objections to divorce were from the Catholic participants that thought it was "an awful thing to break up a marriage" (p.52). Some women in their study separated from their abusive partners, but returned, and endured continued violence, because of their opposition to divorce. Other women thought that public admission of a divorce or the breakup of their marriage, which they perceived as their own failure, was particularly difficult because their "mistakes and guilt were exposed to public view" (p.53). One woman believed that despite religious doctrines, "marriage is for life and you work at it" and that divorce is an easy option for moving from one relationship to another (p.52). A particularly poignant quotation from a woman participant in the 1993 study spoke of marriage in terms of a battle in which, "leaving would be admitting defeat," and that her husband had convinced her that their divorce was her fault and that she, "...was no good as a wife, as a mother, [she] was a slut, a whore" (p.3).

Evidence of the social stigma attached to divorce lies in the analysis that women in Northern Ireland who were seeking a divorce, suffered from feelings of shame, embarrassment, and awkwardness that made them reluctant to get help or leave the abusive environment (McKiernan & McWilliams, 1993). It is nearly impossible for women to challenge the existing ideologies regarding divorce when their personal identity and sense of self worth are dependent on maintaining their marriages—even at the cost of violence (McWilliams; as cited in Dobash & Dobash, 1998).

Due to cultural or religious prohibitions and destructive social stigmas, divorce, in Northern Ireland, is an impossibility for some women. Perhaps alternatives could be, or have been, devised (i.e., judicial separation) that allow victims of domestic violence to remove themselves from the abusive environment while maintaining a sense of religious devoutness. Without alternatives, a significant percentage of the population of Northern Ireland remains ostracized in their communities and victims in their homes. This is a tragic reality that desperately needs further analysis.

Role of authorities. In the initial literature review, various sources briefly mentioned the level of protection received by victims of domestic violence. The literature suggested that the provided level of protection against domestic violence and available options for combating domestic violence were as adequate as could be expected given the turbulent social atmosphere. This analysis was accepted until the first formal interview conducted in Belfast, whereupon it was suggested that the problem of domestic violence is too pervasive and the tradition in Northern Ireland is too family-centric for the police to offer significant protection. After pressing the participant of the interview for a more specific explanation of how domestic violence is combated, she simply replied, "[the police] cannot be everywhere at once." This suggested that: (a) many of the social service agencies seemed dissatisfied with levels of protection (b) domestic violence may be going unchecked during certain times in Northern Ireland (c) traditional views of family violence as secret may be prevailing (d) domestic violence may be overlooked as a serious crime in Northern Ireland.

After this interview, questions about the role of authorities and the levels of protection provided were included in each subsequent interview and the literature was re-examined for specific examples of attitudes regarding levels of protection for victims of domestic violence. McWilliams & Spence (1996) along with the Department of Economic Development (2000) provide some statistics to give a context of levels of protection for victims of domestic violence in Northern Ireland.

- In 1996, females were the victims in 77% of offences including unlawful carnal knowledge and abduction, and in 1997, 66% of the victims in this same category of offenses were female (DED).
- Moreover, in 1996, 9,110 offenses recorded were for violent crime. In 1997, 8,251 offenses recorded were for violent crime (DED). Of these statistics, violent crimes against women represent 37% and 34% respectively.
- Females are consistently the victims in 4 out of every 5 sexual offense cases in Northern Ireland. Females were the victims in 81% of cases recorded in 1996 and 79% of those recorded in 1997 (DED).
- The arrest rate for reported domestic violence incidents is between 12% and 16% in Northern Ireland (McWilliams & Spence).
- 11% of police cases in domestic violence proceed to prosecution (McWilliams & Spence).

Statistics are helpful tools that use measured data to draw comparisons, understand correlations, and gain insight into future initiatives. However, it must be

noted that statistics are only as useful as the accuracy and validity of the initial data they represent. Although data allows researchers to understand the world around them, flawed data begets flawed statistics, which can result in incomplete or deficient levels of protection. Relying too heavily on one form of data collection can lead to loss of perspective and can subordinate the needs of victims of domestic violence to the achievement of arbitrary socio-political goals. Traditional gender roles, privatized families, geographic location, availability of social services, reluctance to report incidents, and community suspicion are only a few of the socio-cultural barriers that may preclude accurate statistics on domestic violence in Northern Ireland.

The notion of 'redistributed resources' is a very common explanation for the lack of financial and physical resources to combat domestic violence. The following quotation addresses the barriers that society in Northern Ireland struggles with in trying to maintain a peaceful existence.

> It is true to say that 30 years of confrontational politics and associated violence have been instrumental in breeding a more violent society. Whilst there is a clear link between violence in the home and violence in society, it is not accurate to assume that domestic violence will increase as a direct consequence of the peace process. The cease-fire has allowed more resources to be available to the police enabling them to take an increasingly pro-active role in combating domestic violence. As a result of better policing, more publicity and improved services in general, women are probably more confident about reporting violence in the home (personal communication, Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation, September, 2001).

That fact that resources are limited and must be allocated to areas of precedence in times of conflict contributes to inaccurate statistics, inadequate recording, and insufficient levels of protection, by preoccupying law enforcement agencies with other types of crises. This preoccupation diverts attention from domestic violence to issues of

social conflict for a period of time. During that period of time, from the perspective of the literature and interviews, domestic violence does not cease—it goes unchecked and unrecorded. There is also a contradiction between the need to describe the incidents and accurately define the prevalence of the problem and the strong tradition of privacy inside the family (Walker, 1999). Perhaps the hesitation to seek an internal connection between domestic violence and social conflict is the byproduct of a traditionally closed society where people are taught to keep their problems, and those of their family, to themselves. Or, it could be the result of indifference in looking at a traditionally female issue amidst the social and academic confines of a very patriarchal society.

McWilliams & Spence (1996) suggest that a traditional policy of non-intervention and cynical, judgmental police attitudes precludes timely responses to domestic violence calls. McKiernan & McWilliams (1993) found one victim that refused to contact the police as, according to this woman, "[the police] are not there to help you." Another victim of domestic violence responded by saying, "In this area police are not people that you normally go to. I mean, to walk out and stop them on the street, they would laugh at you—I mean they don't have any contact with this community whatsoever" (p.56). Another woman said, "We look after ourselves. When we look for help, the police are never included. They are always seen as the harasser" (p.57).

In another study, McWilliams (as cited in Dobash & Dobash; 1998) found that, to some extent, both the police resources and media attention are preoccupied with paramilitary activity. She concluded that domestic violence has trouble gaining legitimacy from the police, security forces, or the paramilitary organizations because of

the violent context in which it occurs—a conclusion that might suggest that the social violence seizes not only the physical resources in Northern Ireland, but also the intangible resources such as recognition and legitimacy. In her conclusion, McWilliams (as cited in Dobash & Dobash; 1998) cleverly explains the dynamic relationship between social violence and domestic violence and how that relationship is dependent upon limited resources.

> In societies under stress, there are fewer options for women and fewer controls on men. When controls, either cultural or institutional, are levied on men's use of violence, then that violence may be mediated or tempered. When those controls are lifted or when they disappear, as in situations of war or political conflict, then permission is granted, metaphorically speaking, for men to assert or reassert their power and dominance.

Existence of social trends during social conflict. The initial hypothesis of this IPA revolves around a basic assumption that domestic violence, in times of war or terrorism, decreases as the social conflict offers an outlet for aggressive behavior. By the same rationale, domestic violence would then increase as social conflict subsides due to the lack of another outlet for pent up aggression. Domestic violence, in times of social stagnancy, offers inherently aggressive individuals the outlet for their aggression that they do not achieve with a stagnant social conflict. This hypothesis also assumes that areas ridden with long-lasting social conflict produce civilians that are inherently more tolerant or comfortable with conflict.

Finding literature that directly supported this hypothesis was an unsuccessful campaign, but plenty of literature and information from the interviews supported the notion of a fundamental relationship between social conflict and domestic violence. As a

test of this hypothesis, this relationship was sought out in the literature, asked about directly in all three formal interviews, and was used for guiding the informal conversations conducted in Belfast.

With regard to violence and aggressive behavior, Northern Ireland is a paradigm of duality. Internally, Northern Ireland is a society that has been in the midst of civil or social conflict for more than 700 years. The worst violence has occurred within the last 30 years and has affected 2.5% of the total population of Northern Ireland. The violence has been responsible for 3,600 deaths and 36,800 serious injuries; all affecting a population of 1.6 million people (http://www.cain.ulst.ac.uk). To put this into perspective, this is proportionate to 632,000 deaths and 6,463,000 serious injuries in the U.S. (281 million) over the equivalent 30-year time period.

Externally, parts of Northern Ireland are sprinkled with all of the latest Western technologies and fast-food franchises, while the people are wonderfully friendly, helpful, and hospitable. However, according to Ms. B's (2001) experience, the conflict has, to some extent, dominated their lives for 30 years. "You can't say it's like living anywhere else, it's not. It's extremely difficult, even walking or driving to work, like on a few occasions when you pass armed men on the streets with masks on. When it happens in society it is very anxiety provoking."

Although a separate research question in and of itself, by virtue of having been exposed to civil and political strife for 700 years and intense fighting for the last 30 years, Northern Ireland seems to have developed more of an ability to tolerate violence than a comparative society that has not been exposed to social conflict. Perhaps not by

conscious choice, but the research (McWilliams; as cited in Dobash & Dobash, 1998), (Ms. A, 2001), (Ms. B, 2001), (McWilliams et al., 1996, 1993) seems to suggest that the population of Northern Ireland has become more accepting of aggressive or coercive behavior. Ms. A (2001) reiterates this sentiment when she explains that, "around the July 12, the marching season, there is a little tension, a fear that there's gonna be trouble at night and riots and things like that...People worry that there's going to be retaliation beatings, shootings, or whatever. There is a certain amount of fear at those times of year." She states that, "I think we do live in a violent society, I mean Northern Ireland has a history of violence...but the majority of people in Northern Ireland are so used to it, what's going on that they just live with it and get on with it. And they don't lie in bed at night worrying about what's going on."

Despite Northern Ireland's violent history and the population's assumed above-average tolerance for violence, a pattern of causal factors for social conflict and domestic violence in Northern Ireland has yet to be identified.

Triggers are social or psychological factors that perpetuate an already aggressive situation and ultimately lead to aggressive or coercive behavior. Social violence may not be a direct cause of domestic violence, but it may be a trigger. In Northern Ireland, Ms. B (2001) talked about the connection between social and domestic violence in terms of triggers when she says, "when you're in this sort of community work and giving refuge to a lot of people, you realize the impact the conflict has on their lives. It *compounds* the problem of domestic violence. It's another dimension that other people in the U.K. or Scotland aren't dealing with."

Triggers do not cause domestic violence or social conflict; they are external or social factors that combine internally to aggravate a potentially violent situation. Triggers include but are not limited to: alcohol use, social conflict, level of education, communication skills (or lack thereof), stress, and economic desperation. For example, Ms. A (2001) mentions that victimized women's shelters are inundated during December and January because of the extra financial pressure on families, more alcohol being consumed, and the overall stress of the holiday season. Ms. B (2001) agrees with Ms. A that alcohol consumption in Northern Ireland can be a factor in domestic violence. From her experience, alcohol is a trigger more than a cause for domestic violence. She talks about how she has witnessed "people having their faces smashed into plate glass windows on the way home from pubs" and the violent subculture that accompanies pubs and clubs when people in violent societies abuse alcohol.

Perhaps social and domestic violence are so misunderstood because various external triggers combine within a person to create a violent outburst. The reaction to external triggers as well as the combination of triggers necessary to lead to violent behavior is as complex and subjective as the perpetrators themselves.

Domestic violence might also be difficult to understand because it seems that the behavior of humans and the causes of violence seem to be completely unpredictable given our current understanding of it. According to the research in this IPA, there does not seem to be any existing connections that directly link domestic violence and social conflict. In fact, domestic violence is such a complex issue that many scholars throughout many disciplines have yet to agree on a single definition. This is reflective of

a collective inability on the part of scholars, psychologists, sociologists, and criminologists to understand conflict, let alone why specific conflict such as domestic violence occurs.

In order to correctly apply a theory like Tedeschi's social interactionist theory, one must have a basic understanding of what he/she is attempting to explain. One must be able to identify the interpersonal objectives of the aggressive party, weigh the options for engaging in coercive behavior, determine grievances for the actor, and plan a course of action that would lead to control of the actor's external environment. The fact that a basic understanding of conflict continues to elude scholars, psychologists, sociologists, and criminologists, only adds to the enormously difficult task of trying to name specific causal factors or apply social interactionist theory.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

I began this IPA seeking insights into connections between social conflict and domestic violence in Northern Ireland. What I found was amazing, shocking, and disappointing all at once. It was amazing, because it introduced me to Northern Ireland from a sociological perspective, I was able to experience a historically conflictual society first-hand, and I was able to analyze connections or disconnections between different types of conflict. It was shocking because every hypothesis regarding causal factors of conflict that I had deduced was challenged and ultimately not validated. It was disappointing because conflict that I thought was connected does not seem to be and, more importantly, I cannot speak definitively to its causes and I cannot help offer insight into the larger problem.

Tedeschi & Felson's social interactionist theory was an invaluable guide to understanding coercive behavior in certain contexts and why those behaviors occur. The contention that individuals engage in types of behavior that are intended to harm or compel others to act in certain ways, that aggressors rationally weigh the costs and rewards of coercive behavior, and that coercive action is largely the byproduct of perceived injustices and external factors within society speaks volumes about an individual's ability to rationalize and justify aggressive behavior in certain contexts. More prevalent use of social influence theories and social learning theories that specialize

in aggressive or coercive behavior like SIT could lead to a greater understanding of future causes of social conflict and domestic violence.

Monica McWilliams and her colleagues seem to be one of only a few academic contingents in Northern Ireland studying a connection between violence in the home and social conflict in society. Her research focuses on experiences of victims, shelter organizations available to victims, and traditional legacies of subjugating women. There are volumes of research citing statistics on reported offenses and number of phone calls made to women's shelters, but there is little on the sociological and/or psychological connection between these two types of aggression-based violence.

Perhaps the most troubling is that the research almost completely lacks a qualitative look into domestic violence. This is troubling because domestic violence is a phenomenon that seems to occur subjectively and a qualitative method of research might be able to offer insights into domestic violence where other methods of research were less helpful. Any direct connection between social conflict and domestic violence is diluted by a combination of numerous factors that could trigger domestic violence or social conflict. McWilliams' quotation (as cited in Dobash & Dobash, 1998) conveys the confusion of scholars:

> One needs to be extra vigilant when attempting to make comparisons about violence against women in societies that are themselves in conflict. The extent to which political conflict affects women's "telling," detracts attention from "private" acts of violence, distorts data-recording systems, and diverts help seeking. Especially in situations of conflict, the categorization of violent acts in the context of the family, the community, and the state may be even less appropriate, because the locus for the abuse is not tied to any single category but instead becomes a pervasive and interactive system for legitimizing violence.

This quotation is evidence of the complex nature of interpersonal and social violence individually, and how much more confusing they become when compounded by one another. Although this quotation lacks a statement of direct connection between social conflict and domestic violence, it is extremely helpful because it acknowledges that victims' abilities to seek help are negatively affected by social conflict.

Based on my research, uncertainty exists whether to paint domestic violence or social conflict with one or a combination of psychological or socio-biological brushes. In fact, the majority of scholars researching these issues have been unable to draw distinct correlations due to an insufficient understanding of the causal factors for either phenomenon. McWilliams obscures the connection even further by suggesting that family violence, community violence, and state violence may mean different things in different contexts. She also suggests that a political conflict affects a victim's ability or willingness to tell their story, as resources and perhaps public interest, lie more prevalently in the social conflict.

Domestic violence does not seem to be about finding an arbitrary outlet for pent up aggression; nor can it be considered a sociological phenomenon. According to my research, the original hypothesis of this IPA, that domestic violence is an intrinsic byproduct of social conflict and that domestic violence is the result of frustrated attempts to satisfy aggressive behavior in society, has not been validated in this particular study. Given the complexity of human behavior in conflictual situations, the assumption that social and domestic violence can be analyzed and explained using a single theory or worldview is also erroneous.

Throughout my research, domestic violence has been described as a rational choice to impose harm or force compliance (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994), the domination of a subordinate figure (Dobash & Dobash, 1998), a way to maintain power and control over others (Walker, 1999), a way to affirm a sense of masculinity (Babcock et al., 2000), a narcissistic tendency (Walker, 1995), a compensation for a perceived lack of power and self-efficacy (Cahn, 1988), a way to live up to excessively rigid sex role expectations (Collins et al., 1986), and a deficiency in moral development that reflects the weakness of moral standards in society (Levine, 1986). All of these descriptions come from different scholars, using different definitions of domestic violence, using different theories, and operating under different worldviews. For as long as these descriptions have existed, none has ever been disproved. Using only social interactionist theory to explain an occurrence that has yet to be comprehensively defined by scholars in the field seems to inadequately represent the phenomenon.

However, if social interactionist theory were accepted, aggressive behavior (i.e., domestic violence and social conflict) could be understood as a means to achieving certain goals. SIT sees violence as functional, and assuming this is correct, it might suggest that warring factions in society or abusive partners in the home are being deprived of alternative solutions for achieving specific goals. It might also suggest that aggressors feel a lack of control over their specific environments and use violence to regain that control. An analysis of SIT might conclude that aggressive people choose to use violence to rectify a grievance and attain a sense of control, dominance, or justice.

However, according to my research, the cause of domestic violence in one home could be completely irrelevant in another, while the cause of social conflict in one neighborhood may totally deviate from the political or religious agenda in another. From my findings, it seems that violent or coercive behavior occurs due to an abundance or lack of complex factors including: self-esteem, sense of identity, self-worth, psychological predisposition, narcissistic tendencies, challenge to authority or control, depression, alcohol abuse, nontraditional gender roles, and social triggers.

Social conflict continues to be an omnipresent threat in Northern Ireland. It seems every time a peacekeeping initiative fails, paramilitary organizations become less interested in achieving political goals and more interested in avenging attacks and leveling the death toll (Barton, 1996). Nationalist leaders will continue to assert the right of the Irish people to national self-determination while Unionist leaders will argue for the recognition of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the U.K. (Barton, 1996)—a reality that significantly reduces the chances of future negotiations and eventual peace in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland will continue to battle social conflict and domestic violence as long as paramilitary factions of the respective communities continue their campaign of vigilante justice and continue modeling behavior that condones the use of violence to attain political and social goals. Violence continues to be a threat to which little or no qualitative research is able to speak. The fact that little qualitative research exists is compounded by the lack of clear data and causal factors, as well as contradictory definitions of domestic violence. It seems the method by which scholars and social

organizations are approaching domestic violence and social conflict is just as separate and divided as the conflicting communities.

Continued social violence combined with inaccurate statistics used to inform legislation on domestic violence is stifling social and academic progress and proliferating an incomplete understanding of domestic violence. The slow process of convincing the government of Northern Ireland to legitimize domestic violence as a national crisis perpetuates the scarcity and misallocation of resources cited in so much of the literature. In fact, it seems that amidst constantly strained relationships between the communities, the issue of domestic violence in Northern Ireland is being relegated to volunteer and non-profit organizations that do a wonderful job but struggle for funding and governmental support.

Observations Regarding Conflict in Northern Ireland

Observation #1:

There is limited research on aggressive societies and what happens when that aggression goes unchecked. It surprises me to think that according to the research I was able to analyze, a connection has yet to be identified. Perhaps this is symptomatic of an insufficient understanding of domestic violence compounded by the extremely complex and lengthy politico-religious campaign of terrorism. Or, perhaps a connection exists but due to our current understanding of domestic violence and the complexity of the social conflict, it is unable to be identified. Regardless, scholars, policy-makers, and the

warring communities might benefit from further analysis of social influence theories that seek qualitative connections between a broad social context and the occurrence of interpersonal violence.

Observation #2:

While in Belfast, I tried to understand the prevalence and intensity of the conflict from the perspective of a Nationalist or Unionist. I got the feeling that, to some degree, the politico-religious divide affects everyone in Northern Ireland. Striking up a conversation with an average person in Belfast while explaining to them my research project led to fascinating reactions about the "real" causes for the troubles and just who was to blame. According to my informal interactions in and around Belfast, outside of the traditionally violent areas of North and West Belfast, people seem to interact amicably with one another. From my experience, Catholics and Protestants outside these areas go to school, pubs, clubs, shopping malls, and restaurants with each other with little harassment or violence.

However, resentment and criticism of "the other side" were common reactions when subtly probing their opinions on my project and their dispositions regarding social conflict and domestic violence. Perhaps the population in Belfast has become disenchanted with their perpetual struggle after years of beatings and killings and has simply learned to tolerate one another.

Observation #3:

Going to Belfast to conduct original research helped me appreciate and understand the nature of violence in a divided society. In fact, traveling to Belfast made this IPA what it is. I would have had neither the understanding of the complexity of the issue nor the subtle cultural perspective that I gained had I chosen to study this phenomenon from a book or computer screen. I had many assumptions about what life was like in Belfast and, had I not experienced it for myself, these assumptions would have inevitably informed the tone and thesis of this IPA. I am both academically and culturally fortunate to have traveled to Belfast as most of my assumptions proved to be untrue stereotypes and mistaken generalizations that would have undermined the validity and ethical basis of my research. It was a wonderful opportunity to grow personally and academically by confronting my assumptions and realizing their error.

Observation #4:

Social violence and domestic violence seem to be two very different animals. Domestic violence is generally a very private form of violence, perpetrated in the home, by an intimate, and used to control and dominate victims; usually resulting in self-consciousness and humiliation for both victim and perpetrator. Social violence is generally a very open form of violence, used to control and dominate one's enemies, and designed to be vengeful or to gain publicity for the plight of groups that feel they are victims of injustice. It was difficult for me to realize that if violence is a spectrum, domestic violence and social conflict seem to grace either pole. If social conflict and

domestic violence are two forms of aggressive behavior that manifest themselves in different ways, their causal factors may be quite different as well—a realization that must be understood before seeking further connections.

Questions Requiring Further Research

Question #1:

Does alcohol contribute to violent or deviant behavior? Ideally, this study would focus on correlations between blood alcohol levels or drinking habits of traditionally violent or aggressive people. This study could serve as a foundation study that would give researchers a basic level of understanding and a common point from which to begin analyzing the relationship, if one exists, between alcohol and violent behavior.

Question #2:

Are violence and stress related? This study could serve as a foundation study to determine whether or not aggression subsides or manifests itself in the form of violent behavior. The conclusions in this study might be invaluable in laying a foundation for understanding violent behaviors and stress-related situations in our everyday lives. They might also help us determine courses of action that cause the least amount of stress and aid us in inventing new techniques to de-stress certain lifestyles. This study could also serve as a predictor for people that live a certain lifestyle and have the potential for violent behavior.

Question #3:

Are aggression and financial scarcity related? This study could provide insight into whether violence can be triggered by a social factor that is shared by many people. This study could also suggest that if a common social factor like financial scarcity can cause aggressive behavior, many other social factors could potentially lead to violence.

Question #4:

Do holiday seasons increase levels of stress? This study may support or contradict the contention that women's shelters are particularly busy during the holiday season and help researchers understand why these time frames elicit aggression in society. This study would need to be a follow-up study conducted after the relationship, if one exists, between violence and stress is understood.

Question #5:

When women's shelters *are* particularly busy in Northern Ireland, what, if anything is happening in society? This study could begin to determine or disprove that connections exist between social factors and domestic violence. Any conclusion drawn from this study would have to be demonstrated consistently in order to validate a theory.

Question #6:

Are levels of domestic violence in non-aggressive or non-warring communities similar to those in communities engaged in civil war or social conflict? Conducting studies of the levels of domestic violence in traditionally aggressive *and* non-aggressive

societies might offer a context for understanding domestic violence, the prevalence of domestic violence in Northern Ireland, and whether domestic violence is indeed affected by social violence.

Question #7:

Are levels of domestic violence in rural sections of Northern Ireland similar to the levels in urban sections? Comparative studies focusing on different sections of Northern Ireland might help determine relationships between levels of domestic violence in urban areas and those in rural areas. This study could also answer questions about the levels of protection and support offered to women outside the urban centers and whether that affects their willingness to seek help.

Question #8:

Do Protestant women seek divorce more or less often than Catholic women? This study may shed some light on the cultural or religious barriers to proactively removing oneself from an abusive situation. This study could also help jumpstart religious reform to offer women that are unwilling to "divorce," other viable religiously acceptable forms of protection and removal from the abusive environment.

Question #9:

Does the threat of divorce ever initiate or trigger and episode of domestic violence? This study could help name another trigger for domestic violence in the home.

It could also help shed light on issues of self-confidence and self-esteem for both victims and abusers. This study could help determine whether domestic violence is used functionally, or as a rational choice, to get an unwanted spouse to leave the abusive partner.

Question #10:

Do certain levels of education change the idea of traditional gender roles in Northern Ireland? This study might suggest that domestic violence is connected to class status. It might also suggest a connection between self-sustenance and education vs. the absence of education and financial dependency. It might suggest a connection between self-confidence and ambition vs. self-consciousness and acceptance of and abusive environment.

Final Thoughts

When I began this project, I started with a lengthy list of assumptions, a rudimentary understanding of the political side of the conflict in Northern Ireland, and a few brochures on combating domestic violence. Ten months later, my original assumptions have proven too general and a bit naive, my confusion about the socio-political future of Northern Ireland has increased significantly, and my only realization, that understanding the impetus for domestic violence is nearly impossible, begs one question: Has anything positive come from this IPA?

Initially, I chose this topic because it was a complex question to which I wanted an answer. Through the anxiety of actually beginning this enormous project, the frustration of not finding that single salient connection, and complete inundation with research, I think I gained a sense of the complex process through which true scholarship occurs. I realized that meaningful information can just as easily come from a disproved theory or invalidated hypothesis as it can from a statistically significant correlation. I realized that sometimes it is more valuable to admit utter confusion about a topic than to operate under a façade of confident cluelessness. I realized that a subtle conversation and a keen ear can produce some of the best research, while random questions from an under-prepared interviewer can cause more harm than good.

In the end, I realized that simply experiencing the learning process is every bit as valuable and rewarding as finding correct answers to the complex questions. The process used in this IPA taught me not how to find answers to the questions I was asking, but that by nature, complex questions inform and create new sets of questions—and that this intellectual cycle forms the basis for the learning process and ultimately contributes to a deeper, richer, more profound pool of knowledge.

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