THE LAND IS OURS

Young people and participation in the Northern Ireland conflict

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The research studies young people in the Northern Ireland conflict. I examine their ways of seeing sectarianism, the conflict and its history, what kinds of experiences they have had from the conflict and what they see as possible solutions to it. This study can be situated in the field of youth studies. Young people's agency is in the focus. I examine the attitudes of the research participants as agents in the late modern era towards politics and participation in society. My main interest lies in the ways they see the role of young people in the conflict and how they perceive their own agency in it. I have also tried to find out how young people feel about political participation in general and as a means of finding a solution to the conflict. I have compared the answers of my interviewees regarding participation to results from Finnish youth studies to see, whether living in the midst of a conflict-affected society politicises young people in a different way than living in a peaceful society. The study is based on 15 interviews of young Protestants and Catholics. The interviews were conducted in Belfast in the spring 2006.

The results of this study show that despite the peace process, the conflict still has many impacts on young people. The majority of the interview participants had been involved in some kind of sectarian incident. Segregation in education and housing affects their daily lives. I found that social class and the area of residence seem to have a big impact on the lives of these young people in terms of the conflict. The young people perceived the conflict mostly as a negative thing and they wished that the cycle of violence could be ended. Their attitudes were not sectarian for the most part, but many interview participants thought that segregation should be maintained in Northern Ireland for security reasons.

Similarly to results attained among Finnish young people, the interview participants were not very much interested in parliamentary politics. They felt frustrated and angry with politicians. There was, however, concern for common issues, and young people's participation in society was seen as a positive thing. Nevertheless, they did not know how young people could participate. In addition to the lack of means of participation, there was a lack of viable freetime options. There was a need especially for such alternatives where young people from both communities could interact safely with each other in a neutral space.

Asiasanat: youth, armed conflict, participation, Northern Ireland, sectarianism

CONTENTS:

1. Introduction[1]

In Northern Ireland (NI) there is one of the few on-going armed conflicts found in contemporary Europe. The NI conflict between the Catholic and Protestant populations has already been going on for centuries. The intensity of the conflict has varied. During the last decade solutions have been sought through a political peace process. Still, there are many challenges to be faced before a commonly accepted and long-lasting peace in all fields of the society can be achieved. Considering the deep historical roots of the conflict and its intersectional character, it is obvious that no change will happen overnight. Elements of the conflict are found in all parts of the society. It is not only connected to politics or religion, the conflict also has an impact on things like ordinary people's daily interaction. Any future change will concern the young people of today. The question is whether they will contribute actively to the continuity of the conflict or if they instead want to work as peacebuilders in the making of a more tolerant society. One possibility is a passive approach, where no such actions are taken and Northern Ireland remains a segregated society. Young people are potential agents of social change and how the society treats them is not without significance (Wyn & White 1997, 6). Scholars have also discussed their own ethical responsibility in accordance with the many difficult social problems found in the contemporary world; war and armed conflicts as one of the most severe examples (Hirsjärvi, Remes, Sajavaara 2002, 25). In my opinion, science can and should have an impact when it comes to social problems. Scholars can contribute by drawing attention to social problems by writing about facts and phenomena. I also think that by conducting his/her research a researcher can particularly in the micro level influence the thinking of his/her research participants. The object of this study are the attitudes of young people concerning the Northern Ireland conflict and participation in it. My study is based on 15 interviews of young Protestants and Catholics. They were conducted in Belfast in the spring 2006.

Youth is a very particular phase in one's life, which needs to be taken into consideration when doing research. This is an important time of constructing their social and cultural identity. They are in a position in society, which differs from that of adults in terms of responsibilities, rights and expectations. Youth is in many ways a phase of 'waiting' and 'becoming', preparing oneself to adulthood as 'complete' persons and legitimate actors. This specific character of youth has to be kept in mind especially when political issues are studied because under-aged people, like most of my interviewees, are not yet full political actors in the sense that they still are not permitted to vote or to be elected in public elections.

Another factor connected to the particular position of youth is social change and its impacts on youth. In the past decades societies in the industrialised Western world have gone through great

structural changes. According to many scholars (e.g. Bauman 2002), this means that Western societies have there has been a turn from modern times to a new stage, an era of late modernity or different type of modernity. Since the great ideologies that used to outline the structure of life in modern times have lost their importance, late modernity offers new challenges to individuals and societies. Late modernity can be seen as a time of innumerable options, flexible identities and increasing individualism. Youth are said to be the best representatives of this new era, being in a phase of life that is especially sensible to social changes (Fornäs 1998, 292). One of the most striking features of the late modern society seems to be young people's lack of interest when it comes to participation in parliamentary politics. This has brought up much concern and questions about what will happen to our societies in the future if young people are not interested in taking responsibility for common issues. Consequently, in the past ten years the agency and participation of young people has been studied a great deal, and it is also the objective of this study in the context of the Norther Ireland conflict.

In this study I have examined the some of the ways in which my young research participants in Belfast see the conflict and sectarianism. My main interest lies in the ways they see the role of young people in the conflict and how they perceive their own agency in it. I have also tried to find out how young people feel about political participation as a means of finding a solution to the conflict. The study can be situated in the field of youth studies. I have examined young people as representatives of this specific time, agents in a late modern era. My intention was to see, whether the attitudes of my interviewees reflect the assumed characteristics of late modernity. In addition, I will compare the results with Finnish studies on young people and their political agency. By comparing my interviewees' attitudes towards politics with the attitudes of young Finnish people I will reveal something about the fact, if living in the midst of a conflict-affected society politicises young people in a different way than living in a peaceful society.

2. Youth as a phase of life

As Fornäs (1998, 293) notes, youth has always existed in some ways but it has been only during the processes of modernity that institutions, such as school or voluntary organisations that demarcate and determine youth in a new way, have developed with bigger volume. Empirically youth has been studied since the end of the 19th century (Puuronen 1997, 8-9). There have been various arguments for why it is important to do research on youth: some researchers have stated that youth are always very distinctive from previous generations, others have concentrated more on the continuities of socialisation (Fornäs 1998, 295). Today youth research is an established field of research and there is no need to provide arguments for why young people should be studied. Youth research is an interdisciplinary field of studies; research concerning young people can be found e.g. in sociology, psychology, economics, education, criminology and cultural studies (Griffin 2005, 13).

2.1 Defining young people

If one is not too familiar with studies dealing with young people, the variety of perspectives in different disciplines can be confusing. Terminology varies as well: even though the age group under discussion is virtually the same, implications are slightly different and the use of terminology reveals the standpoint and the disciplinary context that the writer or speaker is associated with. One can only wonder, then, what is the difference between youth, adolescents, teens, tweens… or is there any? In the following section, I will explain the differences between the various terms that are used in research on young people. I will also clarify in what types of discourses each of them is used.

2.1.1 Adolescence

The term 'adolescence' was introduced by one of the most notable social Darwinists of that time, American psychologist G. Stanley Hall (Griffin 2005, 11). He referred to adolescence as a phase of life, when one gets biologically separated from childhood by puberty. The determinants for adolescence are physiological; adolescents go through hormonal changes that have a strong effect on the adolescent, especially in terms of sexuality. In general there is an increased intensity in many aspects of the adolescent life, which can result in different outbursts. Because of this, adolescence is supposed to be a confusing and distressing time with thoughts of self-doubt and insecurity. (e.g. Griffin 2005, Tyyskä 2005.) Adolescents are considered to have tumultuous relationships with parents and, on the other hand, to become dependent on and close with their peers (Marans & Adelman 1997, 214-215). According to Hall, the purpose of adolescence is to achieve a more

developed, higher level of being: adulthood. This can only be achieved by going through the difficult phases of adolescence, when one has to struggle with his/her personal urges and adapt to his/her environment. Hall called adolescence a period of "Sturm und Drang", a stage of savagery, and the destructive forces of adolescents have to be brought under control by society. (See Tyyskä 2005, 5.) It has been said that due to the tension between the freedom of childhood and adult responsibility adolescence is the period of lifecourse in which individuals are most likely to be alienated (Epstein 1998, 4). Thus, the study of adolescence has concentrated on those young people who have failed to fit the model of normal and are considered to be problematic or estranged in some way (Wyn & White 1997, 54; Epstein 1998, 4). Other notable scholars, such as Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson had similar ideas as G. Stanley Hall about the developing character of individuals.

Bio-psychological theories of adolescence are still widely used and appreciated and it could even be said that they have become the hegemonic discourse of this period of life. I.a. UNICEF (2002) uses the term adolescence to describe the period between childhood and adulthood. According to Marko Raitanen, Erik Eriksson's theory about adolescence as a time of crisis and as a time of finding solutions to that crisis still exists in everyday thinking, even though according to many studies the majority of young people do not go through any period of crisis (Raitanen 2001, 196-197). In the social sciences the term 'adolescence' is mostly connected to the psychological approach (Puuronen 1997, 20). According to Tyyskä, the age group that the term 'adolescent' previously used to refer to was 15-24-year-olds, but today the term is used interchangeably with the Anglo-American term 'teen', which refers to 13-19-year-olds. (Tyyskä 2005, 3.)

2.1.2 Youth

In social sciences youth is a more sociological term which has an emphasis on historical, societal and cultural perspectives (Puuronen 1997, 20). It is seen as the stage between childhood and adulthood, but instead of referring to bio-physiological changes like the term adolescence, it focuses more on the position of young people in society in terms of institutions and on their agency. The traditions of sociological research on youth have their roots in the beginning of the 20th century but youth studies were not recognised as a specific field of sociological research until the 1960's (Puuronen 1997, 8-9). According to Puuronen, youth is a socially determined period of time, when the actions of a young person can be distinguished from the actions of teenagers but also from the actions of adults (Puuronen 1997, 20). This makes *agency* an important theme in youth studies. Cultural perspectives have been salient in the field of youth studies and the social constructional approach has been emphasised in sociological youth research alongside with research on particular

groups of young people (Griffin 2005, 13). According toVappu Tyyskä, many youth researchers try to avoid categorising youth into a specific age range, since youth is a culturally determined factor and its meaning varies in different societies. In sociology youth is seen as a social construction, which depends on things such as physical maturation, cultural beliefs and institutional age grading (Corsaro 1997, Stafseng 1993). As Rosen remarks, age categories are situationally defined within a larger system, and one cannot understand them without taking circumstances and conditions into account (Rosen 2005, 132). Especially the power relations and social divisions of the society influence the lives of young people (Wyn & White 1997).

2.1.3 Children

In addition to the psycho-biological and sociological discourses there are also other ways of defining young people. In many contexts all young people under 18 years old are classified as 'children'. This dichotomy between children and adults is especially effective when one wants to emphasise the vulnerability of the under-aged, their uncompleted development process and adult responsibility over them. Nicola Ansell argues that this is mainly due to the tradition of development psychology, which has dominated child research until the 1990s. Children have been perceived as incomplete, passive persons that are dependent on adult care: they have been alleged to be seen as 'human becomings' instead of 'human beings'. (Ansell 2005, see also Lee 2001.) One of the most prominent examples of defining young people with the term 'child' is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, where a child is defined as any person under 18 years old, unless the legislation of the state allows majority earlier (UNHCHR, downloaded 8.2.2008) . However, this division is not approved and accepted by all and many scholars disagree with its view of young people, claiming it to be too categorical. Especially 'the new social studies of childhood' that have emerged in the 1990s question the prominent way of seeing children only through their inabilities and so they have been exploited of their right to agency. Rather, they should be seen as "worthy of concern in their own right and deserving attention for their own sake" (Lee 2001, 32). David M. Rosen, for instance, criticises this type of thinking arguing that it reduces the characteristics of older children and youth to those that are normally attributed to younger children and disregards the real abilities and developmental level that these young people attain (Rosen 2005, 135). Nicola Ansell (2005) also states that children are often more competent than assumed and they want to be involved but their agency and participation are, though, still far from universally accepted. Contested issues in this field have been e.g. if under-aged young people should have the right to work, to participate politically or to join armed groups.

2.1.4 An interdisciplinary meeting point

At first the differences between the view points of the various disciplines can seem great. Sari Näre has pointed out that at the same time as the psychologists are discussing whether the categorisation of the different stages of adolescence should be specified even more, some sociologists question whether youth even exists as a separate stage of life (Näre 1998, 73). Yet, even though different disciplines have distinctive ways of looking at this period of life and they use different arguments, there is still much overlap within different theories. The questions asked and the answers provided in youth research will be of common use and advantage for all. As Stafseng notes, youth studies are an area, where communication with the neighbouring disciplines is essential (Stafseng 1993, 79). Youth is such a complicated and multifaceted phenomenon that the multitude of perspectives should be seen as an advantage for providing versatile information. Additionally, Fornäs (1998, 17) has noted that instead of simply following the routines of their own discipline, today's scholars also need to see the connections that their research have to different systems, spaces of living, power structures, social relations and formation of subjects.

In this study I will examine youth as agents in society. Indisputably physiological maturation belongs to the phase of growing up and becoming an adult. The age group that I am studying fits the boundaries of adolescence and many of the interviewees are going through the phase of physiological alteration in their lives. Even though I will mainly concentrate on the position of young people in respect to wider societal structures, it should be kept in mind that their actions and opinions are partly also influenced by the turmoil of adolescence. As Jaana Lähteenmaa (2000, 49) has pointed out, the implications of these changes and their social consequences are part of sociological youth research as well. Further on, being mostly under-aged, my interviewees also match the group of 'children', when it is used in the context mentioned earlier. This is the case in many of the studies conducted among young people in Northern Ireland. Therefore I will use appropriate information also from other than sociological sources to complement my understanding of the subject. Similarly to Lähteenmaa (ibid.), my intention has not been to analyse the discourses that the sources contain but to use the factual information and theoretical tools that they provide in order to see what the value of these findings might be sociologically thinking, considering social phenomena that involve youth. Wyn & White crystallize the importance of this kind of thinking: "developing an understanding of youth which is based on the reality of young people's lives requires the researcher to take an approach that moves beyond 'discipline' boundaries, and beyond the dualities that are imposed by the traditional disciplines, to focus more on the connections and links between different aspects of young people's lives" (Wyn & White 1997, 3).

As Suurpää notes, youth is an age group, a generation, a carrier of cultural symbols, a pioneer of changes, the hope of society but at the same time it is a threat. The interpretations of youth are innumerous (Suurpää 1996, 52.) The interpretation of Henna Mikkola offers another view. She writes that being on the one hand understated as a time of uncertainties and on the other hand imitated and idealized, youth is the phase of life that in the Western society evokes the most contradictions (Mikkola 2002, 19). In the following chapters I will take a look at different ways of conceptualising and studying youth.

2.2 Youth as a position in society

The basis of the concept and category of youth is clearly age. As Päivi Harinen (2000, 14) writes, youth –as well as other age-bound categories– is constructed by the structures, institutions and discourses of society. Consequently, a given model of youth is constructed and all normal individuals that are going through this phase of life are considered to fit this model of youth. Youth can be distinguished as a separate position in society with respect to other societal positions. (Harinen 2000, 14.) Mostly youth is seen as a phase between childhood and adulthood. Youth are not children anymore, but as the status and rights of adults are not yet permitted to young people, they are forced to live in a state of waiting (Raitanen 2001, 218). As Pierre Bourdieu puts it: young people live in a social 'no man's land' (Bourdieu 1985, 130).

Harinen remarks that youth and adulthood are often considered to be positions that are not in balance with each other, even though as positions in society they are consecutive. Adulthood is regarded to be something more than youth and the subjectivity of adults is seen to be fuller and more complete than the subjectivity of young people (Harinen 2000, 19). According to Ansell, this type of thinking is also visible in the field of youth research: she thinks that instead of having been studied in their own right youth have more been studied only as en route to adulthood (Ansell 2005, 22).

Sinikka Aapola writes that age categories (*ikäjärjestys*) are mostly maintained in three different ways: firstly on a discursive level, secondly on the level of cultural practices and thirdly through institutional practices (Aapola 2005, 259). Due to the complexity of these different ways that determine youth it is not clear when a young person is ready to occupy the adult position. The determinants that have traditionally marked the ending of youth and the gaining of the adult status are such as marriage, childbearing, graduation or acquiring a profession or a trade (e.g. Puuronen 1997, Ansell 2005, Harinen 2000). Traditionally youth has been regarded as a time loaded with expectations of becoming an independent individual and acquiring an autonomous social status

(Harinen 2000, Lähteenmaa 2000). Besides their age, most young people share many similar circumstances, such as social institutions like family, school, free time organisations, mass media and cultural industry (e.g. Fornäs 1998, Wyn & White 1997). Young people are also confronted with various attitudes, social determinations and concrete obligations and limitations. The concept of youth influences and restricts the lives of young people. The categorisation brings material effects e.g. socially, economically and legally. On the other hand young people are representatives of certain cultural values and they possess some liberties that other groups do not (Lähteenmaa 2000, 48). Sharing these kinds of circumstances makes youth a social group that differs from other groups with different conditions in life.

2.3 One youth, does it exist?

It is not clear what exactly is the group of youth and what it means to belong to this group. Furthermore, it is under discussion whether it actually is one universal group. Lately it has been fiercely criticised that differences between young people have not been taken into account in traditional youth research or in public opinion. Many scholars claim that the general view on youth has been quite biased in such a way that it implicitly creates an image of a 'mainstream' youth (e.g Pohjola 2001). In her studies that analyse the construction of youth in academic texts, Christine Griffin found that this view derives for the most part from the theory of adolescence. According to this universalising perception, young people have certain features and characteristics and this view often portrays a white, heterosexual, middle class male as the norm. (Griffin 2005.) As Wyn & White (1997, 55-56) note, the term adolescent is not used by adolescents themselves. According to the authors this signals that the young people who are referred to as adolescents are being objectified, categorised and judged.

On the other hand, it is recognised that there are different young people that distinguish from the 'mainstream' youth because they do not fill all the expectations that are set for them. These young people are often seen to be 'at risk' or 'on the margins'. This point of view is especially adopted by the officials and it includes an implication of youth being a problem in the society. (Wyn & White 1997, Pohjola 2001.) Nikkilä has the view that most of the public discussions concerning youth in general consider youth to be problematic and, according to him, even youth researchers and professionals who work with youth often share this point of view (Nikkilä 2002). Pierre Bourdieu states that defining youth is a question of power divisions. By using different determinants a certain kind of order is established and each age group is pointed out a place in it which they need to accept (Bourdieu 1985, also Puuronen 1998). Bourdieu states that the relationship between biological and societal age is very complicated and it is affected by a struggle between the young and the elder.

According to him, the young are envied by the older generations for the young have a position with many opportunities, as they will be the holders of power in the future. (Bourdieu 1985, 128-134.) Wyn & White (1997, 13) note that in the categorical approach, which highlights the similarities among young people, the impact of power relations created in institutions and the role of changing economical and political circumstances are widely ignored.

Bourdieu agrees that talking about youth as a coherent group with common interests is incorrect and by doing so, different social worlds that practically might not have anything in common are bound together. It would be more accurate to analyse the differences between different groups of youth. (Bourdieu 1985, 129-130.) Among contemporary youth researchers it is now quite widely accepted that youth is not a homogenous group, instead there are many differences that substantially divide young people and their lives. Merely sharing the same age is not enough to bind all young people together (e.g. Griffin 2005, Harinen 2000). It is important to keep in mind that almost all ethnographic studies of young people reveal that also young people themselves are aware of the differences between them (Wyn & White 1997, 55). As Fornäs (1998, 296) states: the 'mainstream' can only be seen to exist as an imagined structure, and the youth is internally divided by many things. Divisions between young people are created by various nominators such as class, gender, race, sexuality and disability. These factors cannot be disregarded as they affect the lives of young people on a very fundamental level and moreover, have an influence on the unequal rights and possibilities that the youth have. Their social, economical and cultural realities differ from each other. According to Griffin, e.g. young people of sexual minorities or youth with disabilities are still underrepresented in analyses regarding youth that challenge the 'mainstream' point of view (Griffin 2005, 16).

However, not everybody agrees with the need to distinguish as straightforwardly between different groups of young people. Some researchers think that focus on the differentiation is exaggerated and that the big picture is more relevant (e.g. Näre 1998, 73). They are right; even though there are differences, youth should still be seen as a social group. Due to their age they do have something fundamental in common: they are all going through a phase of physiological change but also they do occupy a certain position in the society with some similar interests (e.g. Bourdieu 1985, 135). However, in my opinion the concept of youth should be treated simply as a general, theoretical hypernym and it should be kept in mind that the practical realities of young people differ from each other. In the following quotation Wyn & White sum up very well how the concept of youth can be used:

> Although the experience of youth varies widely and may not exist at all for some, the concept of youth is important in enabling us to understand some of the complexities of

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social change and the intersections between institutions and personal biography. We argue that it is most usefully seen as a relational concept, which refers to the social processes whereby age is socially constructed, institutionalised and controlled in historically and culturally specific ways. (Wyn & White 1997, 10-11).

2.4 Attitudes and values of youth in late modernity

2.4.1 An indicator of changing modernity

As Fornäs has written, youth are a good indicator of social change because, contrary to adults, they are not stuck to certain habits or routines or accordingly are not as deeply connected to the familiar or scholar world as younger children. Instead, they are sensitive to cultural changes and they also express this clearly (Fornäs 1998, 36; 294). A social change in industrialised societies is taking place and it affects people's values and ways of acting in the society. In this chapter I discuss some of the characteristics that have been seen as distinctive for our time. I will examine how they have been noted to be reflected in the attitudes and lives of youth. My interest lies in the way that this social change affects young people's participation in society.

There is some disagreement on the actual historical starting point of the era called modernity. Modernity is connected to different types of social, political, economical and cultural processes. Some significant characteristics that have been seen to outline the era of modernity are the development of the capitalistic system, industrialisation, urbanisation, democratisation, secularisation and civilisation (Fornäs 1998, 32;51.) It it yet under discussion whether this era of the modern has already ended or is still ending. In this study I will use the notion of late modernity. As a result of immigration, travelling, media, new information technologies and trade, modernity can be considered to be a universal phenomenon. Fornäs notes, though, that modernity does not mean that people are becoming universally similar. On the contrary: it signifies a process of differentiation that takes place universally in all fields of life, e.g. between an individual and society, work and freetime, sense and sensibility and production and reproduction. (Fornäs 1998, 45-46.) Johan Fornäs has written that the dynamic character of modernity has lead to a situation, where reproduction of patterns between subjects has become more problematic than before. Even though in present times there is continuity as as well there are changes, people feel that they are living a period of constant change. Many traditions are being questioned and the present moment is experienced as separate from history. (Fornäs 1998, 35.) In times of rapid change the feeling of insecurity increases, which might renew old traditions or produce new ones. (Fornäs 1998, 36.)

At the same time that changes take place in the everyday life, conventional identities have also been questioned. There are new options available in the multitude and richness of new impulses. Fornäs

remarks that this has an ambivalent nature: setting free from the conventional ways gives people a new type–of freedom, but it also results in confusion, contradictions and insecurity. (Fornäs 1998, 61-62.) Consequently, it is typical for modernisation to create increasingly big differences between individuals as well as between groups (Fornäs 1998, 77). The standard course of life has lost its meaning and it has become individualised (Aapola 2005, 259). Individualisation has been connected to many kinds of phenomena, such as the loosening of social ties and the weakening of solidarity. But, then again, it has also been connected to the enrichment of social life, the liberation of the individual and new ways of self-development (Suurpää 1996, 56). The individualistic ideology shows itself especially in the way how people perceive social activity. According to Puuronen (1998, 242), young people especially have lost their faith in collective action for changing the society.

Because the people of modern times do not rely on gods or traditions as the foundation of their life anymore, it is during these modern times that the problematisation of different eras and especially their own era has arosen. The process of rationalisation and other processes have resulted in the need of constant reflexivity and negotiability of things. (Fornäs 1998, 42-43; 79). In the modern times also transitions between generations have reduced their significance. Fornäs (1998, 295-296) writes that whereas earlier generations expected mostly the maintenance and reproduction of traditions from the younger generations, today people need to be able to adjust to the different needs and ways of living of people of all ages. According to Fornäs this is caused by the strengthening of reflexivity and the individualisation of identities, which makes adults more similar to the young people than before. On the other hand, Fornäs adds, the processes of modernisation tend to widen the gap between generations. The socialisation processes that young people go through are today very distinctive from what they used to be and therefore different generations go through very different kinds of experiences. Accordingly, Puohiniemi noted in his study on the values of various generations of Finnish people that the two youngest generations studied were individualistic and hedonistic. He points out that, among other things, the rising level of education, increasing mobility and mass media, which has become more entertainment-oriented, have the effect that younger generations are more exposed to similar influences everywhere. The earlier generations, on the contrary, were exposed to more local influences in their youth. He notes, though, that the time span in his study is too short to convincingly prove this theory. (Puohiniemi 2002, 102.) Fornäs (1998, 40; 296) reminds that generational changes that happen in cycles are often mistaken as results of longstanding modernisation even though they might just as well be resulted by coincidences and cyclic processes or the need to differentiate itself from the previous generation. As an example, he mentions the apocalyptic conclusions that have been drawn from the gap between the generation of

the Baby Boomers and the generations before and after them.

Youth have been said to be the most representative group of the late modern times. Yet, one can ask if it is meaningful to talk about the common characteristics of the youth of one period of time or is it once again a generalisation that goes too far? Jaana Lähteenmaa has criticised some theorists that have intented to create generalising theories of the common mindset of (post)modern youth and of the situation where the youth find itself in today. She says that it can not be assumed that the same conditions apply for all the youth that live during that period of time (Lähteenmaa 2000, 50). It cannot be questioned, however that there are significant social changes currently taking place. These changes inevitably have a profound effect on the lives of young people. Young people today are facing a situation where the experiences of previous generations provide little help in finding one's way towards adulthood and hence traditions are not valued anymore by youth (Aapola & Ketokivi 2005, 284; Puohiniemi 2002, 72). Ignoring these changes would mean making a substantial mistake if the objective is to try to understand the situation of the young people and their motives for acting as they do and, on the other hand, to try to understand something new about the way that the society functions.

When talking about the attitudes and values of youth in late modernity, I will not try to explain the mindset of all the youth at the moment. I want to draw attention to some tendencies that are especially characteristic of the times of late modernity. Instead of stating that these characteristics are shared by all the young people in Northern Ireland, I want to examine these theories with regard to my empirical data. By doing so I want to see, whether some of these characteristics can be found in the opinions of my interviewees and what this signifies in terms of the overall situation. As Lähteenmaa (2000, 51) continues, it is important to see, in what kind of different ways these tendencies typical for this period in life affect the lives of young people and what kind of different groups of young people are formed as a result of this. In the following chapter I will examine the ways that are currently seen as the most salient tendencies in the attitudes and values specifically typical among the people that are young in the time of late modernity.

2.4.2 Grand narratives and social change

The lives of today's young people are shaped by a multitude of different things in addition to the traditional educators, families, school and youth workers. Young people today get different philosophical, societal and other types of influences from outside their own cultures when travelling, using media culture and the Internet. These might offer a distinctive view of the world than the formal education does. (Helve 2005, 205-207.) On the other hand, in many ways the local

cultural identity also has a heightened meaning and local and national identities are constantly being reaffirmed and guarded (Wyn & White 1997, 2). All this means that young people live in crossfire of different kinds of messages that stress different values. From all of these impulses they need to be able to pick out the personally most meaningful ones and to construct their world view and personal attitudes and values based on them. In this process young people need to evaluate many ethical and practical issues and threats – ranging from loss of gainful employment and lack of career options to ecological risks (Paakkunainen 2001, 73). It has been said that in terms of development of values the age between 15-24 years is the time when one is most exposed to changes (Puohiniemi 2002, 107). Consequently, Helena Helve found in her empirical follow-up study that from a certain age the values of the young people that she studied did not change significantly anymore (Helve 2002, 221). This means that the values that young people develop during the period of youth can be seen to be significant in terms of the future as well.

Many empirical youth studies confirm what the theories concerning postmodernism have concluded: the grand narratives have lost their meaning and there are not any individual great ideologies anymore that guide the lives of young people (e.g. Helve 1996, Mikkola 2002). In her many studies on the values of young people, Helena Helve has noticed that there are no certain guidelines or uniformity in the values of young people. Many young people are disappointed with the narratives of God, the equality of socialism or the capitalist economical system. However, Helve does not think that the ideologies have disappeared completely, they have only taken another form and hence are not as clear-cut as they used to be (Helve 2002, 25). Jaana Lähteenmaa shares this view and adds that the most salient subcultural phenomena of recent years in Finland have been influenced by the collapse of the great narratives and the emergence of heightened individualism. According to her, many of the youth subcultures that function in an aggressive manner intend to hold on to the old great ideologies. By doing so they try to slow down the changes that are occurring in society. She continues that a new big ideology, which in many ways has replaced the old ones, is the ideology of the rights of the animals and harmony between all natural creatures. This can been seen to be contrary to the modern values that stressed the importance of technology and the human power over the nature. (Lähteenmaa 2000, 54-69.) Yet, this new ideology only affects some parts of life and it is not shared by everyone. The results of the study conducted by Henna Mikkola (2002) underlined that the young research participants experienced their generation to be "abnormal" due to the lack of a narrative and a mission that would unify their generation.

2.4.3 Splittered identities and the rise of individualism

The lack of certain guiding ideologies and values impacts also the way of constructing identities. Since there is not just one way to go but there are different paths to choose from, young people try different alternatives and often use fragments of many of them simultaneously. This can even cause anxiety because the variety of alternatives is too great and the process of identity construction is difficult (Mikkola 2002, 108-109). In her studies Helve has discovered that the identities of youth have transformed themselves to be part-time identities. Young people have different roles, values and morals in different situations. She found that only very few young people belong to only one certain value group: according to the situation, the people and the environment, young people change their attitudes and choose their values. (Helve 2002.) The same applies to their social groups: instead of having a steady social environment, many young people belong to several changing groupings at the same time. The young people that Leena Suurpää (1996, 58-60) interviewed did not want to belong to only one social group because they felt that to be restricting. They valued flexibility and ability to function in different social roles according to the situation at hand.

Groups and social life are still important to young people, but the essence of them has changed in such a way that individualism has a more heightened value, and hence being a part of society has different meanings than before (Helve 2002, Suurpää 1996, Raitanen 2001). Furthermore, the rise of individualism –which is claimed to be one of the most salient features of the late modern times, as was discussed in the previous chapter– can also be found when interviewing youth. In her study Henna Mikkola was looking for common features that would connect people of the current generation of youth. She found that on the contrary to many previous generations, in general it was difficult to find such features. She noticed, though, that a common ground for most of the young people that she interviewed was the dissolution of the importance of traditions and the emergence of a new, stronger individual identity. The experience of this change was shared by the young people and, according to Mikkola, it turned out to be the most essential factor that the whole generation had in common. (Mikkola 2002.) Statistics on values have also shown that the younger generations are more strongly individualist than the previous generations. The quantitative study conducted by Puohiniemi (2002) showed that the younger a person is, the more individualist values he/she has.

In the lives of youth individualism is visible in staying true to the personal values and living according to them, not to the demands that have been set from outside. Many of Leena Suurpää's young research participants highlighted that individuality is something that belongs naturally to the human character. Thus it is something that should be valued and the own personality should be

emphasized in social interaction. (Suurpää 1996, 56-57.) When Marko Raitanen wanted to find out what young people 17-28 years old thought about reaching adulthood, he noticed that one of the most important criteria for the young people was being independent in their thinking and not to value uncritically the opinions of other people. The young people interviewed also wanted to be economically independent and thus to be able to live freely according to their own personal needs and habits. (Raitanen 2001, 204.) This has positive effects as it gives young people a certain freedom in their lives and an ability to choose their own objectives and measures in their lives without being too much restricted by others. However, Suurpää interpreted that the other side of the phenomenon can be insecurity as social relationships are not as natural as they used to be, and it is getting more and more demanding to build and maintain them. Hence, youth individualism is characterised by the ambivalent tension between independence and loneliness. (Suurpää 1996, 61.)

2.4.4 Ceasing the moment

Since the society is changing rapidly many aspects of life are very uncertain. One cannot be sure whether or not things will be the same tomorrow as they are today. Quoting Pohjola, it is more and more difficult to construct an identity and to gain an understanding of one's possibilities. This leads to the crumbling of young people's trust in the future: the only thing that is guaranteed is that there are no sure promises of a better future (Pohjola 2001, 199). One has to be able to adjust himself to rapid changes. Contrary to earlier generations, contemporary youth have learned to live in the midst of constant changes already from a young age. As we previously have noticed, there are several ways to react to these changes: some subcultures try to slow them down. The case with most youth is that they try adapt to the changes using their own flexibility. Suurpää notes that her research participants felt that in the changing world every option is available and hence one cannot know that what the future will hold for him, it stays wide open. Because of that they wanted to hold on to the current moment: it is for real whereas the future is only potential. (Suurpää 1996, 53.) Because of the uncertainty of the future the current moment is seen by youth as a disappearing resource and therefore it has to be enjoyed to the fullest. Commitment to long-lasting projects is not what today's youth is looking for (Helve 2002, 223).

Continuity and security were earlier the core values of life but today young people cannot plan their lives very far. Therefore youth want to take advantage of their independence and of the different possibilities available. They appreciate excitement and trying new things. (Pohjanheimo 2005, 247-248.) Contemporary youth have been defined by many to be a generation of hedonists. Raitanen (2001, 206) has the opinion that youth idealise liberty at the expense of responsibility. This means that things are valued most of all according to their degree of amusement. Jaana Lähteenmaa

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wanted to test the hypothesis of the high level hedonism of contemporary youth in her research among young voluntary workers who were working in a youth night cafe. The result was that the young people working there were indeed mostly motivated by the joy that they felt when working there -not by feelings of responsibility, which might have been the case with the earlier generations. Lähteenmaa called this type of thinking hedonistic altruism. (Lähteenmaa 1997, 204.) Quantitative studies concerning values of young people have also showed that there has been a shift towards more hedonistic thinking. Qualities like challenging oneself, forgiveness and self discipline are loosing their value among young people whereas the qualities of self respect, liberty, ability and bravery are being more and more admired (Pohjanheimo 2005, 248-249). Just like individualism, hedonism is correspondingly stronger the younger a person is (Puohiniemi 2002, 101).

Even though hedonistic values are increasing among young people it does not mean that their lives are all about seeking personal pleasure, at least not in a purely materialistic way. There have been many results that have indicated a shift from material values to post-material ones, such as the quality and meaningfullness of life, personal development and social relationships (Raitanen 2001, 217-218). The longitudinal research that Helena Helve (2002) conducted on young people between 1989-1996 showed that during this period the values of the young people interviewed were gradually transforming to be more and more postmaterial. Differences between the sexes could be seen, as the girls had less materialistic values than boys. The most educated young people had the most postmaterialistic values. Due to young people's lack of interest in politics, the hedonistic values they have are considered alarming (Helve 2002, 17). Raitanen (2001, 187-188) has pointed out that some sections of society will be concerned if the new generation of youth does not rebel and oppose to the hegemonic order; it is seen as a sign of the reaction of society. This might be the case with parliamentary politics but the assumption that youth do not have any social responsibility at all anymore is a misinterpretation. The postmaterialistic values of contemporary youth also include concerns for common issues. Suurpää (1996, 55-60) noticed that in their responses the young people that she interviewed showed signs of such modern thinking that wants to combine individual freedom and social responsibility. Suurpää called this "individualistic solidarity". Her research participants were concerned about the future of the generations to come, especially in terms of environmental issues. They considered the responsibility to be common for all and that it should be shared. What the relationship between contemporary youth think and social responsibility more concretely is will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.5 Youth and participation

2.5.1 Political socialization

Psychologists have stated that alongside with other thinking also political reasoning seems to develop with age from concrete to abstract. There is a major difference between the reasoning of a 12-year-old and the more abstract reasoning of a 16-year-old. It has also been noted that authoritarianism declines with age: it was discovered that 14-15-year-olds seemed already capable to understand that there were many possible solutions to problems. (See Coleman & Hendry 1999, 195-197.) I wanted to interview youth with an abstract understanding of politics, and the majority of my interview participants were aged 14-18. No differences have been found between the sexes in accordance to political socialization (Covell 1999, 120), and I interviewed both boys and girls. Whether one is active or passive in societal issues does not depend on the place of residence either, shows the longitudinal study of Helve (Helve 2002). Cultural background determines largely the process by which children acquire their basic political knowledge, values and attitudes. It is commonly acknowledged that the primary agents of political socialization are the family, school and the mass media but the significance that each one of these has in the process of political socialization of children has not been agreed on. Some stress the importance of the parents (e.g. Coleman & Hendry 1999, Raitanen 2001). Others, such as Covell (1999, 112) state that schools and the mass media are the major transmitters of the overriding cultural beliefs and values of the society in which the child is raised and thus they have more importance now than the family. At least in Finland education seems to be an indicator: the most passive young people in Helve's study were the pupils from vocational schools whereas the upper secondary school (*lukio*) pupils were the most active ones (Helve 2002). Raitanen (2001, 190) points out that in many cases the role of the school is valuable since the philosophical and ideological foundation provided by the family might be one-sided. Thomas Ziehe (e.g. 1991) thinks that the role of other socialization agents outside the family has recently grown considerably larger so that it can even be claimed that a new type of socialization is taking place.

2.5.2 Limited possibilities of participation

The view that adolescents have the capacity to weigh information, to be critical to some extent and to make decisions is generally agreed on. Rosen reminds that some researchers go even as far as to say that children at the age of fourteen are already as competent as adults to make major decisions concerning their own welfare. Furthermore, some legal scholars have increasingly argued for the adolescent decisional autonomy (Rosen 2005, 135.) However, even though it is recognised by many

authorities that youth have many capacities that enable them to participate in decision making, full responsibility is not granted to them. Often the citizenship of young people is considered to be of the future, not of the present, and thus their understanding of and participation in democratic processes are seldom a priority in the institutions in which they are involved (Wyn & White 1997, 115).

Consequently, in some matters participation is expected from young people, but as Anneli Pohjola (2001, 191) writes, it is often forgotten what their reality is, what is the real attainability of their possibilities and thus, what is the actual range of their free options. Youth are often being criticised of being passive but it is not taken into consideration that their situation is not easy. As the society is changing, among other things in terms of education and the employment market, young people face a problem when trying to make their own decisions: it might be that the old patterns are no longer valid but new models of transition have not been created yet. (Pohjola 2001, 191.) Päivi Harinen writes that it is a paradox that young people are expected to participate in the decision making concerning their own issues but, at the same time, they are being pushed aside from the public space and democratic participation processes. Harinen that the generally preferred democratic ideals do not concretely take place in the reality of young people. Some norms that tie young people closely to their families and restrict their participation in society are different age limits and different practices of employment policy. (Harinen 2000, 12.) A punitive response to juvenile offending and the removal of social security have also contributed to reducing choices for young people in the United Kingdom (Hackett 2005, 75). One example is that young people who cannot support themselves financially do not have the full citizenship rights. The UK government assumes that young people outside of paid employment should be financially supported by their families and therefore income support benefits are not paid at an adult rate until the age of 25 (Valentine 2003, 47).

Societies are becoming more and more institutionalized and therefore the state is considered to have an increasing effect on the lives of the citizens. On the other hand, as a political system the state seems to be becoming more and more distant to its citizens, especially to its younger citizens. (Harinen 2000, 199; Haikkola 2005.) Some reasons for this might be that the globalisation and the EU have diminished the power of decision making on the local level and the importance of economics has increased at the expense of politics (Haikkola 2005, Harinen 2000). The quantitative research conducted by Puohiniemi also showed that Finns of different value types strongly agreed on the claim that politicians do not do their job as well as they used to do (Puohiniemi 2002, 335). This is not limited to Finland only, the situation is similar in other European countries as well (Puohiniemi 2002, 336; Helve 2002, 17). Young people also in the UK have a very cynical attitude

towards politicians (British Youth Council 2007). According to Kari Paakkunainen, these kinds of changes have had the impact that the project of building up a common, shared social welfare state has become incomprehensible and ambivalent for young people (Paakkunainen 2001, 74). This has been varified by many research results (e.g. Helve 2002, Harinen 2000). Suurpää noted that her research participants had a skeptical attitude towards changes in society: even though they thought that changes would be important, they found it difficult to know what types of changes would mean positive things in the future. In their opinion it was impossible to see young people as the agents of those changes. They thought that creating changes should be a part of adult life as well and the way to do that should be more individual than collective. (Suurpää 1996, 64-68.)

2.5.3 From traditional politics to "new" politics

The lack of interest in traditional politics can be seen in the low voting rates and in the unwillingness to commit to political parties. The British Youth Council survey from 1993 showed that a fifth of the 16-25-year olds were not registered to vote, four times as many as in any other age group (see Hackett 2005, 74). The least active voters were from the poorest sectors of the population, who, Hackett reminds, have been marginalised by the UK social policy (ibid.). On the other hand, more recent survey results in the UK reveal that even though they feel ignored by the politicians and are thus becoming more and more skeptical of them, young people between the ages of 14-18 across the UK would like to act on common issues and have their voices heard. The majority of them would, among other things, be prepared to vote in a referendum (British Youth Council 2007).

Thus, on the level of civil society there has partly been a shift from supporting traditional parliamentary politics to "new politics", which means turning everyday life issues, such as consuming and eating, into political acts (e.g. Haikkola 2005). It is often assumed that since youth no longer have big, unifying ideologies they are not active at all in the society. This is not true: youth in fact do occupy many kinds of roles in the society. However, unfortunately their contribution is often overlooked by adults, which also contributes to apathy among young people (Bailey 1999, 74). Instead of having large-scale institutionalised political programs, today's youth participate more on the grass-root level in the society in their everyday life. Suurpää's research results show that in addition to long-lasting forms of activity, there are many short-term situational acts and projects with the same objective of influencing society. She notes that youth aim to combine different ways to act, they do not see the old and the new forms as contrary but rather as complementary. The ideological elements are not consistent; different kinds of ideals can be combined. (Suurpää 1996.)

Suurpää reminds that the scope of so-called active youth is large: it includes conventional voters as well as unconventional demonstrators (Suurpää 1996, also Henn & al. 2002). She remarks that there are mainly two differents ways of viewing the political participation of today's youth, it can be seen as disturbing resistance regarding the traditional ways of participation or, on the other hand, as molding their own way of functioning in society (Suurpää 1996). An example of young people that could be classified as conventional voters was found in the study of Lotta Haikkola (2005). Her young research participants were not actively participating through lifestyle choices such as those related to consumption. According to Haikkola, their ideas of societal participation were rather traditional. They saw voting as the most important way of participation. Other forms such as working in NGO's, demonstrating or civil initiatives were not something that they would consider doing. (Haikkola 2005, 144.) This can, however, be seen as a rather exceptional result because most studies show that in general the emphasis on the youth societal activities is on small, non-institutional projects that often have an individualistic perspective and rhetorics (Helve 2002, Paakkunainen 2001).

In the study of Henna Mikkola (2002, 98) young research participants had written stories about their generation. Not all of them dealt with societal issues but in those that did there was no single opponent to be attacked, the motivation was simply general frustration at the current system. The young people in the stories did not want to influence by using political institutions or interest groups but rather on the grass-root level: by demonstrating, informing and getting informed. This kind of activity and participation has in the contemporary youth research been seen as important and commonplace among contemporary youth. As Suurpää (1996) remarks, though, for many it seems to be difficult to conceive the untraditional ways of participation as societal activity. And yet, youth of the 21st century introduce new ways of rebelling: instead of allowing everything, one of their ways of participation is to set boundaries (Salomäki 2005, 451). Helve writes that the values and attitudes of youth contain societal criticism, for example on globalisation. This criticism can result in anarchist acts against society by the young people that are disappointed in the democratic decision making. At the same time, the vagueness of young people's world views can be viewed as openness that provides new kinds of possibilities e.g. for pluralism of values and for increasing democracy. After all young people seem to value human rights, equality and protection of the environment and welfare society. (Helve 2005, 220.) Youth do regognise their limited possibilities to influence on a global scale but this does not diminish their concern on environmental issues for instance. Helve thinks that mixing many different ideologies and traditions seems to have created a new type of moral and ethical thinking. (Helve 2002, 15; 18-19.) Instead of big ideologies, today's youth choose small projects such as vegetarianism, recycling and making ethical choices as

consumers. They are interested in a type of politics, which is more participative and concentrated on localised and immediate issues. (Helve 2002, Henn et al. 2002).

3. Youth and armed conflict

3.1 The field of research in general

Before examining the conflict in Northern Ireland I want to introduce some research results from other parts of the world, because the impacts of armed conflict on young people are similar in differen parts of the world in many ways.

3.1.1 Growing field of research

Even though children and young people have inevitably suffered under armed conflicts throughout history, not much research has been done in this field, on the contrary (Cairns 1996, 25). Among other things, new technologies in warfare, such as antipersonnel mines, carpet bombs and rockets have had such an impact that most of the victims today are civilians (Grabarino & Kostelny & Dubrow 1991, 1-15). Without a doubt children have also earlier participated in wars, but young people taking actively part in armed conflicts on as wide a scale as now is quite a novel phenomenon. It has been facilitated by the development of inexpensive, small and light weapons that can easily be handled by children as young as ten years old (Machel 1996, 10). Together with the growing masses of child soldiers the humanitarian interest in young people and armed conflicts has increased. This interest has taken concrete forms in developing international legislation regarding the treatment of children. The most comprehensive international treaty concerning children is the Convention on the Rights of the Child that was created in 1989 and complemented in 2002 with the Optional Protocol that aims to strengthen the legal position of children especially in terms of armed conflict (UNICEF 2003). The researcher interest in the subject has also slowly increased during the recent decades. However, the number of researchers specialised in this area is still fairly small and many conflicts in the world remain under-researched (Merabet & Gatak 2001).

In Finland some research has been conducted on the effects of war on children, but research has mainly been done by historians or psychologists and most of it is related to the two Finnish wars and the World War II. There is a lack of contemporary sociological research relating to young people in armed conflict. In the non-academic area there have been some smaller publications, for example the pamphlet *War has a child's face* (*Sodalla on lapsen kasvot*) (Saipio 1999). One Finnish researcher has gained international recognition in the field of young people and armed conflict: psychologist Raija-Leena Punamäki has mostly focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its psychological effects on children and women (e.g. Punamäki 1987 and 1990).

As briefly mentioned in chapter 2, young people and armed conflict is a topic that evokes strong moral and political views (e.g. Rosen 2005), and thus the "Straight 18"-discourse wants to draw a clear line between under 18-year-old minors and adults. Therefore the language on this field of research normally does not differentiate between youth and children but refers to all under-aged as 'children', as they are for the most part treated this way in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and especially in its Optional Protocol.

Merabet and Gatak (2001) have listed existing literature on children and armed conflict dating mostly from the second half of the 1990s onwards. According to them the existing literature can be divided thematically into seven major categories:

- Academic Literature on childhood

- The Possible Forms of Humanitarian Intervention

- Population Displacement and Refugees

- Violence on Children by State and Non-State Agencies

- General Expositions on the Phenomenon of Child Soldiers

- The Social and Psychological Impact of War on Children

- Case studies on Humanitarian Emergencies Involving Children

Next I will take a brief look at some studies that have been conducted on the topic of children and armed conflict.

3.1.2 Effects of armed conflict on children and youth

Most of the scarce amount of literature that is available in Finland on the subject deals with the psychological effects of armed conflicts on children (e.g. Dodge & Raundalen 1991, Punamäki 1987, Punamäki 1999, Garbarino & Kostelny 1997). Sociological studies are harder to find.

The findings of Garbarino, Kostelny and Dubrow (1991) from five war zones around the world show that except for physical sufferings, children also suffer socially and mentally from armed conflicts. As professionals on the development of children, they especially concentrated on the latter part listing factors that, according to their view, helped some children to cope better than others. These included e.g. experiences of self-efficacy and a supportive educational environment as well from the parent as from people outside the family. They also pointed out that ideology is an important psychological resource but, especially with children, it can either lead to a process of

dehumanisation or, on the other hand, also make the children more morally sensible. However, they remind that some of the worst consequences of war to children are not psychological but social: "social class does not take a vacation in a war zone" (ibid. 151). As the basic infrastructures fall down, the ones that suffer the most of its consequences, such as food shortages, are the poorest. This was one of the conclusions that also Ed Cairns reach in his book "Children and Political Violence" (1996) that describes research done on different parts of the world. Even when people are surrounded by community violence, the major difficulties in everyday life may be the effects of economic and social disadvantage. These might even accumulate in the midst of a conflict.

However, it seems quite clear that traumatization is not inevitable but that symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are fairly common among young people that live within an armed conflict. There have been concerns that children's moral reasoning might be modified by exposure to political violence and, according to the evidence acquired in Northern Ireland, there are some indications pointing to that direction. Cairns stresses that also this needs to be studied more. Meanwhile, it is clear that juvenile crime increases during times of political violence. Cairns suggests that the main reason is likely the absence of authoritarian figures like fathers and the police combined with economic hardships. (Cairns 1996.)

Young people are also often personally involved in armed conflicts. Guy Goodwin-Gill and Ilene Cohn noticed in their studies that children are often preffered in recruitment to armed forces because due to their size and inconspicousness, they can perform many tasks better than adults. The tasks that children often perform are those of couriers, spies, supporters and combatants. As combatants children can be transformed into the fiercest fighters in some circumstances. They reveal that children are motivated to join armed forces for example by social and economic injustice and religious, nationalistic or political ideologies. Personal revenge can also be an important motivator if the child has witnessed the death or maltreatment of people close to him. The authors question most children's ability to estimate the conditions in which they "volunteer" to be fighters. Goodwin-Gill and Cohn suspect that most young soldiers are exposed to subtle manipulation, which leads to their recruitment. Many are also straightforwardly forced or coerced to it. Nevertheless, they admit that some children consider to be better off in the armed forces because of elements of loyalty, discipline and respect there. The children often also feel to be safer in the armed forces than for example on the streets. Goodwin-Gill and Cohn add that unfortunately, even though the child might regret his decision to join the armed group, leaving it safely often turns out to be impossible. (Goodwin-Gill & Cohn 1994.)

Probably the most comprehensive work on children and armed conflict is the study of Graca Machel (1996). She visited conflict areas in different parts of the world and consulted governments, military personnel, legal experts, NGOs, the media, civil society leaders and women and also children affected by conflicts. Among the general means that she recommended for improving the situation were investing in education for peace, conflict resolution and social justice. She stated that this needs to be done just as much among adults as among young people. Cairns states that on a more general level there should be efforts that try to influence group boundaries in such a way that the content of stereotypes would be altered and positive intergroup attitudes would be fostered. This might be done inter alia by social scientists and policy makers. (Cairns 1996.)

The Troubles in Northern Ireland have not reached the intensity of many other conflicts in the world, hence the experiences of Northern Irish children and youth are not as severe as in other zones where there is an internal or international conflict raging. For instance such problems as internally displaced children and sexual violence have not been reported (Muldoon 2004, 456). Most of the troubles mentioned above, though, also affect the lives of young people in Northern Ireland that live in the midst of a segregated community where political violence occurs. In the following chapter I will discuss more in detail how young people in Northern Ireland have been studied in accordance to the conflict and what kinds of results the researchers have attained.

3.2 Research on children and youth of Northern Ireland

Ireland is well represented regarding research on youth and armed conflict. The first studies on the effects of the conflict on children were done already during the first years of the conflict in the 1970s by psychiatrists and psychologists (e.g. Fraser 1974). In the beginning the main interest lay on the short-term stress effects caused by the conflict but eventually the research questions were broadened to cover the causes and the effects of the conflict more widely. As the nature of the conflict changed, the research also took a turn from the psychopathological perspective that focuses more on the damaging effetcs of the conflict to a more optimistic view that emphasized the resilience of young people. (Roe & Cairns 1998, 174.) Throughout the conflict the research concerning young people has focused on the psychological impacts. Nevertheless, local social scientists have also participated in the structuring of hypotheses and hence, only a few of the studies are purely psychological in nature. Moreover, they also take into consideration a wide range of circumstancial and social facts such as religion, history, demography, politics and economics. Most of the researchers do not even explicitly categorise their studies as belonging to the field of any particular discipline. In the past two decades the focus has been more on social factors such as the

emergence and sustenance of sectarian attitudes, intra- and intergroup relations and political involvement of young people.

The disadvantage is that the research on young people in Northern Ireland has concentrated on many different questions and there are not many studies that deal with the same subject. Thus, the generalisibility of the results is often a problematic issue. Most of the studies have used questionnaires as their method, not many qualitative studies have been conducted on youth in Northern Ireland (Smyth; Fay; Brough & Hamilton 2004, 95). Most of the studies that have 'children' as the studied group also include youth in it, sometimes even over 18-year-olds and mostly they involve only older children. There are also some studies that concentrate on younger children up to 12-years-old and, on the other hand, a few studies handle only 'youth' or 'adolescents' (see Roe & Cairns 1998, 177). There is no uniform usage of the terms that are related to young people.

3.2.1 Psychological impacts

Even though I do not study youth from a psychological perspective, it is important to know whether the youth in Northern Ireland have been found to be psychologically affected. Their psychological well being clearly has an impact on their participation in society. Most of the evidence seems to suggest that adolescents have coped fairly well in Northern Ireland in spite of the armed conflict, Roe and Cairns (1998) state in an article which summarises research done so far on adolescents in Northern Ireland that (Also Muldoon, Trew & Kilpatrick 2000). However, even though there are no signs of severe mental problems among the adolescents in Northern Ireland, many of the young people suffer from anxiety after violent incidents (Roe & Cairns 1998, 188). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is common among people who have suffered from or witnessed violence. Its symptoms include sleep disturbances, cognitive impairment, repetition of traumatic insidents, emotional detachment and increased states of alertness. It can be distinguished from regular stress symptoms based on its longer time span. (Muldoon & Cairns 1999, 324-326.)

Even though severe traumatisation has been quite rare, according to the study of Smyth & al. there are many effects on young people caused by the conflict that have been unreported, most of them social in nature. These include chronic anger, lack of trust in adults, isolation and feelings of marginalisation, bitterness towards the other community and the police, distrust of authority and lack of contact with the other community (Smyth, Fay, Brough & Hamilton 2004, 99.) The study also showed that young people worry about their own safety and about the safety of their families.

In many families the conflict and its incidents are a taboo subject. This has had a negative impact on many family relationships (ibid.).

3.2.2 Anti-social behaviour

The anti-social behaviour of young people has been a concern, since it has been feared to be connected to the continuity of the violent conflict. It has been noted that many children, especially boys, in Northern Ireland show signs of antisocial behaviour, acting-out and aggressiveness. Wilson and Cairns point out that these trends of conduct disorders seemed to be parallel with levels of political violence. However, they state that it is difficult to conclude to what extent the conduct disorders are effects of the conflict because they also correlate strongly with socioeconomic disadvantage. (See Roe & Cairns 1998, 182.) Nevertheless, the results of E. Joan Vannan (1989) implicate that the latter should not play a significant role in conduct disorders, because her study showed that Catholic young people did not have more conduct disorders than their Protestant equivalents, even though they came from significantly poorer families. Her results point more to cultural factors as the cause, because among Protestant youth a big family and parent unemployment were often indicators of conduct disorders, which was not the case among Catholic youth.

The moral thinking of adolescents in the midst of the conflict has been a cause for concern for many and thus it has also been a research interest. There has been a fear that youth in Northern Ireland would cease to respect life. The study of McWhirter and Trew showed that young people in Northern Ireland had generally pacifist values and violence was not concidered to be the optimal solution for societal change (McWhirter 1984, 169-171.) Cairns, having concluded a research with 600 young people, came also to the conclusion that living in a violent environment does not change young people's moral reasoning about violence. The answers of the research participants were similar both in areas with high levels of violence as well as in the areas with less violent incidents. (Cairns 1996, 96.) In general young people from deprived backgrounds have more experience of political violence than young people from middle class backgrounds, boys more than girls and Catholics more than Protestants (Muldoon 2004, 462).

The conflict has not had a major effect on crime: the overall crime rates of Northern Ireland did not rise during the conflict and the majority of juvenile offenders were not charged for crimes of violence. (Roe & Cairns 1998, 180-182.) Generally juvenile crime in Northern Ireland has been low compared e.g. to Scotland, Wales, England or the USA (McWhirter 1984, 165-167; Roe & Cairns 1998, 181.) However, it has to be kept in mind that a part of the illegal activities stays unreported.

Especially the community punishment systems controlled by the paramilitaries play a significant part in this. (Roe & Cairns 1998, 181-182.) It is common for youth to fear violence and the so-called kneecappings of paramilitaries (e.g. Byrne 1997, Smyth et al. 2004). Unfortunately there is also a faction of youth in Northern Ireland that thinks that rioting and the so-called joyriding with cars boisterously is exciting and entertaining. This can be seen as a sign of certain type of socialization to violence. (Smyth 1998.) Hence, even though the conflict has officially ended for the majority of the citizens in Northern Ireland, the youth rioting has still continued (Smyth, Fay, Brough & Hamilton 2004, 105).

3.2.3 Denominationalism and sectarianism

Elements of the conflict are found in all parts of the society. It is not only connected to politics or religion, the conflict is also very much constructed through people's attitudes and daily actions. It is quite clear that the denominational identities of young people are still strong. The study of Connoly and Healy shows that already by the age of seven and eight an emerging denominational habitus can be found even among the children who do not live in zones of accentuated denominationalism. Many of the children that took part in the research understood that supporting a certain football team or engaging in certain ativities means that they need to be part of one or the other community. All of the research participants between the ages of eleven and twelve were aware of the divisions that existed between Protestants and Catholics. (Connolly & Healy 2004.) Adolescents in a study by Cairns and Mercer (see Roe & Cairns 1998, 177-178) named being Catholic or Protestant as one of the most important characteristics of a person. Siobhán McEvoy did research among young Catholics and came into the conclusion that those with the strongest categorisations between "us and them" were the young people who had the least educational and employment opportunities and who also had suffered the most harassment (McEvoy 2000, 100). Unfortunately, there have not been any published accounts on the roles of parents, peers and schools in the socialization process so far (Trew 2004, 509).

Sean Byrne (1997) studied children of different ages and compared the results of children who were in an integrated school with the answers of children from non-integrated schools. He discovered that there were three separate national identities to be found among the pupils: British, Irish and Northern Irish. According to Byrne, the Protestant choice of national identity is more complex than the Catholic one: there seems to be identity conflicts among some Protestants due to the lack of sympathy from the British government and media and the uncertainty of Northern Ireland's constitutional position. Surprisingly, it was the Protestant children from the integrated school that were more sympathetic towards the British rule and monarchy. The differences between ages were

visible in the replies regarding the causes of the conflict: younger children were not yet aware of the historical roots of the conflict whereas older children, especially Protestants, were more likely to see the partition as the reason for the conflict. Cross-community programs have not seemed to have an impact on the development of distinct social identities. (Byrne 1997.)

When Sinclair, Cole and Kelly (2004) did a research project with 200 young people between the ages of 15-17, almost three quarters of them admitted that they had at some point acted in a sectarian way, often it was a pay-back for the sectarian treatment they had experienced themselves. The young people reported that the most important influences for developing sectarian attitudes were family background, social lives, school, media, politics and personal experiences. In Byrne's study the majority of the non-integrated schoolchildren saw class as a significant factor, sectarianism and participation in the conflict was mostly seen as a working class phenomenon. Most of these children came from middle class families. (Byrne 1997.) A parallel finding was made among the children in the Connolly & Healy study; the middle class children, both Protestant and Catholic, disassociated themselves culturally and lifestyle-wise from the people that were involved with violence. Some of these children seemed to develop negative stereotypical views on working class communities and children, regardless of their religion. (Connolly & Healy 2004, 102). Byrne found out that the integrated children were more sensitive to the idea of prejudicial behaviour, which could be considered as a possible cause for the conflict. Yet, only the fifth-year pupils of the integrated school were in favour of more integration as a possible solution to the conflict; none of the non-integrated pupils did so. Many Catholic pupils saw class differences and economic inequality as a reason for the conflict. Children in the integrated school had more negative attitudes towards the conflict than children from the non-integrated schools. Byrne explains this with the fact that 60% of these pupils live in "hard-line" areas where violence rates are high. (Byrne 1997.)

In a study conducted by Sinclair et al. it was noted that e.g. musical bands, drama groups and specific cross-community projcts can be succesful in creating cross-community relationships. However, they remarked that these friendships are often short lived (Sinclair, Cole & Kelly 2004, 160). Sheena McGrellis (2005) also discovered in her study that young people are interested in alternatives related to consumption and leisure. In these contacts the processes of globalisation and alternative identities are found to be more important than cultural and ethnic difference. In the study of Kelly (2002, 70), however, almost one-third of all the young participants felt that ending sectarianism in Northern Ireland is not possible.

3.2.4 Young people's opinions on Northern Ireland society and politics

Whyte (1995) noticed in her longitudinal research that the attitudes of 12-year-olds in Belfast had turned into a more positive direction with regard to themselves and the future between 1981-1992. The change had been particularly remarkable among Protestants. Whyte writes that this improved self-esteem and hope among 12-year-olds reflects the attitudes of adults and changes in the Northern Irish society as the peace process continues. She thinks that these changes in the attitudes predict positive changes in their attitudes regarding e.g. education and participation in the society. Unfortunately, a more recent study of Smyth, Fay, Brough & Hamilton (2004) reveals that many young people still feel themselves excluded and alienated from the political life of Northern Ireland. Many feel that life in Northern Ireland is economically, socially and politically limited and they want to guarantee a better future for their own children by moving away. One of Sean Byrne's most striking findings was that greater optimism towards the future was only found among fifth-year pupils in the non-integrated school. Byrne interprets this to be due to to their awareness of the opportunity to leave Northern Ireland in the future if they wish to do so. It was also this group of pupils that was more politically aware than the rest of the young people. (Byrne 1997.) In Siobhán McEvoy's study on young Catholics (2000), the ones that had the most pessimistic attitudes regarding peace were the young people who had the least personal experiences of the conflict. They felt that as they were not part of the problem themselves, they could not have an impact on it. On the contrary, the young people, mostly females that lived in conflict prone areas were personally motivated to contribute to achieving peace. Jean Whyte noted in her study (1998) that strong feelings of nationality were connected to higher interest rate in politics. Those who described themselves to be British, or even more Irish, were more likely to rate politics as important. The amount of cross-community contacts was not related to attitudes towards politics.

Lamentably, Northern Ireland does not seem to differ from other Western countries in terms of political involvement of young people. Even though young people are hoping for a more peaceful future, they do not seem to see politics as a reliable way of achieving a peaceful society. Rather, they feel frustration and indifference, even hostility towards politics (e.g. Muldoon 2004, McEvoy 2000). Jean Whyte discovered in her study that a very low percentage of the young research participants were enthusiastic to get personally involved in politics (Whyte 1998, 611). Politics was seen as one important factor for developing sectarian attitudes in the study of Sinclair & al. and only 5% of the research participants felt that politicians in Northern Ireland were not sectarian. Hence, politicians were perceived as negative role models. (Sinclair, Cole & Kelly 2004, 159-161.) However, the research participants in Whyte's study preffered the political route over violence when they were asked for solutions for the conflict (Whyte 1998, 613).

Young people feel that they have no control on the policies and that people do not listen to them enough. They think that they could make a difference if they were given the means and opportunity to do that. (Sinclair, Cole & Kelly 2004, 161; Kelly 2002.)

3.3 Background to the Northern Ireland conflict

As Hayes and Campbell (2005, 9) write: "There is no history of Ireland; instead multiple, contested versions exist from which to choose. The same can be said of contemporary analyses of the current conflict and its causes." Since their experiences have been very different, the interpretations of the very same situations or phenomena can vary considerably between people in the two communities. It is not simply a matter of personal experiences: the schooling in Northern Ireland has been one of the biggest examples of the segregation in the NI society, and as a result of this, the curricula are also different. This means that the history that is taught to Protestant children is very different from the history that the Catholic children learn at school. In other words, both groups of the conflict tend to look at the historical facts and incidents from their own perspectives and highlight those facts that have been most meaningful to them. Ross (1993, 156) has noted that the use of history is always selective and patterned. Acknowledging this, I have attempted to be critical with my sources.

3.3.1.The history of the conflict is long

Ireland was colonised by Anglo-Normans and their English tenants in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Crown was the overarching political authority, but locally the native landlords were in control. (Ruane & Todd 1996, 18.) Already in the mid-thirteenth century there were many local and regional conflicts taking place continuously, as the Irish kings and Norman lords competed over the resources of the country (Parkhill & Ferguson 2004, 12). In 1601 the whole island was placed under English rule. As a result a 'plantation' of Ulster with English and Scottish settlers was implemented in order to develop rural Ireland (Parkhill & Ferguson 2004, 18). Starting from this period the social and political relations in Northern Ireland were organised by the categories of Protestants and Catholics (Cash 1996, 16). On the 12th of July 1690 the significant Battle of Boyne took place. The Protestant King William of Orange had been asked by the English to come to Ireland in order to fight against the Catholics. In the Battle of Boyne, he defeated the Catholic King James II who consequently had to flee from Ireland. (Jennings & Durran 1986, 20.) During the following 300 years there were several attempts to gain independence for Ireland, but before the year 1912 all of the attempts failed.

The reason that caused a juxtaposition within the islands population and resulted in its splitting into two conflicting groups, was that more than 70% of the population in Ireland were Catholics and

roughly all the rest were Protestants. These two groupings had different interests. The Protestants had developed an independent political culture separate from that of the Catholics. In northern part of Ireland the numbers of Catholics and Protestants were fairly even, but the Protestants had managed to get hold of most of the jobs in the North-West, which was the most industrialised corner of Ireland. Many Protestants also owned companies and they favoured their political allies in many respects. (Suzman 1999, 94-95.)

3.3.2 Struggle for independence

In the 1880s the Irish Parliamentary Party started fighting for Home Rule. This caused panic among the Protestants, who were afraid of losing their religious rights and economical positions if they were to become a powerless minority. Because of this, the Protestants started to get organised as well and the Ulster Coalition was created to oppose the Home Rule. They were indeed effective: they managed to hinder two attempts of introducing the Home Rule. During this time Irish nationalism became more militant and what used to be an aspiration for a united Ireland, turned into opposition against the process of 'Anglicisation' and against the Protestants: sectarianism took over in Ireland. (Suzman 1999, 95-98.) The Irish Volunteers were formed in November 1905 and they were ready to use force against the Protestants (Suzman 1999). In 1913 the armed Ulster Volunteer Force was created to resist implementation of the Home Rule. With the help of their British allies, they got armed and started planning a coup d'etat in Ulster. In response, the Catholic mainstream opinion also started to change as a result of the unrests. All of this happened on the verge of the World War II. Both of the volunteer groups decided to send troops outside Ireland at the behest of Britain, and the implementation of the Home Rule was postponed till the end of the war. (Suzman 1999, 96-99.)

In the Easter of 1916 nationalists declared Ireland independent. The following week, the revolutionaries had to surrender to the British troops and the survived 15 ringleaders were executed. Among the Catholics this caused admiration of the nationalists and condemnation of the British politics. In 1917 Sinn Fein, a party promoting Irish national self-sufficiency, got its first seats at Westminster and 1919 the Sinn Fein MPs founded the First Dail, named after the ancient Gaelic parliament. They declared their support to the 1916 Proclamation of the Republic and announced that they had become the legislative assembly of an independent Ireland, whose official language was Gaelic. (Suzman 1999, 100-104, 186.) With the financial help of Irish immigrants living in America, Sinn Fein boycotted Westminster and established its own court system and "ministeries" in Dail. It also gained the support of local citizens and administrators. The Irish Volunteers renamed itself to Irish Republican Army (IRA) and they were co-operating with the Dail. 1920-21 IRA killed

525 people and wounded more than 1000 people, but there were many atrocities also committed by the Protestants as well as by the British government. (ibid. 136-139.)

In 1920 Ireland finally got the long awaited Home Rule, which provided legislatures in Dublin and Belfast. Further on, the Irish Free State was created in 1922. It was guaranteed a fiscal autonomy, full dominion status and control over domestic issues. (Suzman 1999, 139-141.) In 1924 the South and the North of Ireland were institutionally separated, 6 counties of Ulster remaining a part of Britain. (Suzman 1999, 141-144.) Even after the partition, the conflict did not end or calm down, but continued fluctuating and escalating into crisis-situations at times. During the post-partition time the goals to be achieved regarding Irish nationalism were full independence and economic, political and cultural development. A new constitution was adopted in 1937 in order to redefine the relationship between the Irish Free State and the United Kingdom. It defined the national territory to be the whole island of Ireland, although it stated that the jurisdiction of the existing state distinguished from that. In this new constitution it was also emphasised that Ireland was predominantly a Catholic society. (Brown 2004, 153, 266.) Separation from the British was made final in 1949 when the southern part of Ireland left the British Commonwealth and declared itself a Republic (Ruane & Todd 1996, 234).

3.3.3 The Troubles

There was one group, whose interests had not been taken into account after the partition and who remained feeling like "second class citizens" (Cleary 2002, 98): the Catholics in Northern Ireland. The Protestants in the Irish Free State were also in a difficult position and many of them moved to Northern Ireland or Britain after the independence. Some were forced to do it because of military withdrawal and administrative reorganisation. At the end of the 1960s, as in many parts of Europe, civilians in Northern Ireland started to protest collectively through demonstrations and public manifests against things that they were unsatisfied with. There was discontent especially among the nationalist Catholic population that felt discriminated in housing, employment and political representation. Housing policy or employment practices were difficult to change directly, so the civil rights movement started to protest against the state in a way that was still available to them: questioning the Protestant, unionist power over public space by marching for their cause. (Jarman & Bryan 2000.)

This started as a non-violent campaign but in October 1968, the first violent incident occurred between the civil rights marchers and the police in Derry/Londonderry (Höglund 2004, 91) After that there were similar incidents also in other parts of Northern Ireland. The violence escalated and

Catholic houses were burnt down and number of people were shot dead (Cushnahan 2003). According to Bew, Gibbon and Patterson, "almost the entire Catholic population became a united militant political force" for a short time in 1968-69 (Bew; Gibbon & Patterson 1996, 146). The riots even brought about evacuations: over 1500 households had to move away from the most violent areas (Bew; Gibbon & Patterson 1996, 156). As a response to the request of the leaders of Northern Irelands Catholic community, British troops arrived to Northern Ireland in 1969 for peacekeeping purposes.

Many Catholic civilians felt that they had to respond to the violence directed at the Catholics by arming themselves. There had been a tradition of paramilitary activities in the Catholic side already before the independence of the Republic of Ireland, and now this tradition was revived. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) became the main republican paramilitary group. Their ideology was that only a united Ireland would be a possible solution for ensuring the rights of the Catholic population in Ireland. The means that they used were primarily terrorist attacks against British political and military units (Cushnahan 2003). As a result, at the end of the year 1969 many working class areas had become No-Go areas for the security forces (Jarman & Bryan 2000, 108). The British army that had been called in to protect the Catholic community was on the contrary considered to be an oppresser of the Catholics (Cushnahan 2003). The period of sectarian violence called the Troubles had begun.

As the Catholic republicans started violent attacks against the Protestant unionists, there was a growing concern among the unionists that the police and British army would not sufficiently protect the Protestant civilians. As a counter-reaction loyalist paramilitary groups were created for protecting their areas from the IRA (McAuley 1994, Jarman 2000). The most prominent ones were the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defense Association (UDA). The UDA started as a group of working-class men watching over their area of Shankill and East Belfast as vigilantes. Eventually it was organised on military lines in 1971 to fight the Provisional IRA and became the biggest loyalist paramilitary organisation. 1973 a splinter group was separated from the UDA and another paramilitary organisation, the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) was started from it. Another main loyalist group, UVF had originally been founded already in 1913, but with the onset of the Troubles it was reorganised and it became the most ruthless of the loyalist paramilitary forces. Allegedly, there were highly trained ex-soldiers of the British Army in it. (Jennings & Durran 1986, 73-74.) In 1974 the IRA was supplemented by the creation of another Catholic paramilitary group: the breakaway of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) gave birth to its militant wing, the Irish Nationalist Liberation Army (INLA) (ibid. 65).

The first few years of the Troubles were mainly about street rioting. The police used rubber and plastic bullets for maintaining control over the rioting crowds and many people, predominately Catholics, were killed and shot at (Parkhill & Ferguson 2004, 32). Later on, in the beginning of the 1970s, IRA started a terrorist campaign which included car bombs and bombing of economic targets, which caused high numbers of civilian victims (Trew 1995, 53). In 1971 the internment without a trial was introduced. Even though there were violent acts organised by both communities, the internment touched mainly Catholics. This resulted in strong feelings of alienation in the Catholic community and the support for the IRA increased massively (Cushnahan 2003).

Liz McWhirter describes what it was like to live in Northern Ireland in the beginning of the 1980s:

> The most obvious signs of the threat of violence…have been the ubiquitous security measures: posters warning about possible explosions or murders; soldiers; vehicle-check-points; restricted vehicle-zones; bag searching and body frisking at entrances to many shops, bars, etc., and in Belfast city-center shopping precinct; wire grills on windows; barriers outside buildings (to prevent vehicles parking); ramps on roads; reduced slits on post-boxes; barriers separating Protestant and Catholic areas, etc. Advertisements urging the use of official 'confidential' telephones appear regularly at the top of the front page of local newspapers, and periodically security warnings appear on television." (McWhirter 1983, 140.)

The beginning of the 1980s was also a time of political hunger strikes. The first political martyr who died of hunger in the H-blocks of the Long Kesh prison, where political prisoners were held, was nationalist Bobby Sands in 1981. After him there were nine other hunger strikers that perished on behalf of their ideology, since Margaret Thatcher was determined not to grant political status to them under any circumstances. (Bew; Gibbon & Patterson 1996, 209.) However, gradually the violence focused predominately on confrontations between the security forces and paramilitary groups. The conflict continued in assassination attacks, sectarian killings and targeting off-duty police, prison officers and judiciary (Trew 1995, 53). Over time the loyalist paramilitaries reinforced their groups and became more and more active: by 1991-1992 they had outnumbered the IRA in the amount of killings (Bew; Gibbon & Patterson 1996, 218).

During the Troubles violent clashes in the street level occurred within and between communities, the police or the British army (Parkhill & Ferguson 2004). During 1969-1999 3585 people were killed in Northern Ireland, most of them civilians (Smyth 1999, 57). Although the number of casualties is not very high compared to many other armed conflicts (Höglund 2004, 94), the amount of people that the conflict has personally touched is much greater. Evaluating the wider effects of these deaths, Smyth (1999, 57) reports that at least 6800 people have had either a parent or a sibling killed in a Troubles-related incident. She continues that over 40 000 people have been injured, which is likely to be a rather conservative figure. In a small society like Northern Ireland, this is already a large number.

The whole of Northern Ireland was not equally affected by the Troubles, because the clashes concentrated mostly on certain areas. Over 48% of the killings that took place during the Troubles occurred in the districts of North and South Belfast, Derry/Londonderry city and South Armagh (Smyth 1999). In general, Belfast has been the most active area in terms of the Troubles. This is partly due to that, as the capital, it is politically the most important city and, regarding inhabitants, also by far the biggest city in Northern Ireland. In addition, an important factor is surely the fairly even number of Catholics and Protestants and the densely populated living environments on a small area. Even though many neighbourhoods and districts are highly segregated, the different communities still have had to live very close to each other.

3.3.4 Finding political solutions: Northern Ireland peace process

In 1985 the Republic of Ireland became politically involved with the United Kingdom as a consultant in the matter of governing Northern Ireland (Anglo-Irish Agreement), and a secretariat in Belfast was established for this purpose. Britain also announced that it would not object if Ireland wanted to reunite. (Brown 2004, 333.) In spite of this, violence in Northern Ireland continued until 1994, when finally a peace process was started. IRA declared a ceasefire in August 1994 and the loyalist paramilitary groups did the same six weeks later. Immediately afterwards security measures were loosened and broadcast restrictions were removed. There was a drastic decrease in political violence after the ceasefires, but as a counter effect, direct confrontations between Catholics and Protestants increased, particularly during the marching season. (Höglund 2004, 94-96.) In February 1995, the British and Irish governments signed a Framework Document, which stated that there would be a common reorganisation of the political life in Northern Ireland. (Cash 1996, 203-204.)

On the 10th of April 1998, on Good Friday, there was an agreement on self-determination that would end the justification of violence on any side. It declared the establishment of a North-South ministerial council and a British-Irish council for co-operation. Most importantly, the new Article 3.1 in the Irish constitution now declares that a united Ireland can only be created with the consent of the majority of the people and only by peaceful means. (Brown 2004, 391, 396.) The Belfast Agreement includes an arrangement of power sharing between unionists, nationalists and republicans in a devolved assembly (Hayes & Campbell 2005, 36).

3.3.5 Situation at the time of conducting the interviews: spring 2006

One of the most striking features of the Northern Ireland division has been the system of sectarian territoriality that includes segregated living areas, particularly among the working-class population,

in many parts of Belfast and elsewhere in Northern Ireland. There are also separated school systems for Catholics and Protestants. There are also some integrated schools, but only a small percentage of the young people in Northern Ireland attend them. Even small children have learned to relate to their own community and differentiate between Catholics and Protestants. Children have been observed to distinguish Catholic and Protestant names and symbols already from the age of three (Connolly; Smith & Kelly 2002). Denominators of a person's community along with his/her name can be e.g. the place of residence, schools attended, vocabulary and accent of speech, colors worn (green vs. orange) and the supporting of a certain football league (Celtics vs. Rangers) (e.g. Ross 1993, 155; Huttunen 1995). Being able to tell the difference has been essential in Northern Ireland, for there have been times during the Troubles when merely being Protestant or Catholic was considered a sufficient reason to kill someone. Separate living areas offer better possibilities for protecting their residents and also for enhancing the cultural identity of both communities (Huttunen 1995, 37). During the peak of the conflict there were even "peace lines" built to Belfast so that the two communities would not have to interact with each other on any level. A "peace line" is a metal wall that separates a Catholic neighbourhood from the Protestant equivalent. The first and most famous of them was built in 1969 by the British troops to separate the Protestant Shankill area from the Catholic Falls area (Jennings & Durran 1986, 30). In the spring 2006 there were over 30 walls of this kind in Belfast, and the last one had been built only two years before (El País 27.2.2006). But the separation was not as clear-cut as it used to be: e.g. in the wall separating the Protestant area of Shankill from he Catholic area of Falls there was a gate where one could pass through to the other side in the day time. However, according to El País (ibid.) the people living close to the wall still never cross to the other side. Due to the measures of segregation there are still many people in Northern Ireland who have never met a person of the other community in their life time (Smyth 1998, 24). Where encounters do take place, widely accepted cultural norms often function to make the contact between Catholics and Protestants as superficial as possible (Ruane & Todd 1996, 65; see also Huttunen 1995).

In 2006 it was also everyday life in Northern Ireland to be surrounded by sectarian symbols in both communities: most visible were the memorials for dead national heroes, kerbs painted with the colours of either the British or the Irish flag and the murals. Both Catholic and Protestant murals signalled their sectarian message with strong political slogans and pictures portraying e.g. significant historical incidents, religious motifs or intimidating, armed paramilitaries. These murals and their message could hardly be avoided in the cities, since they were massive and especially in Belfast they were spread all over the city. According to Hannu-Pekka Huttunen (1996, 52-53) the murals, together with the cerbs, have had several functions. One of them is to distinguish and to

mark the boundaries between Catholic and Protestant territories. The murals also remind people of the core values of the community and they function as creators of communal spirit. On the other hand, they create and reproduce images of the enemy.

The division of the society has also been very visible during the parades that both communities annually hold. Parades have been important events in Northern Ireland, particularly for enhancing feelings of unity within the community. For example in 1997 there were 3314 parades in Northern Ireland, which is a very big amount in a county like Northern Ireland and it shows well the great popularity of the phenomenon. The majority of the parades have been Protestant. Protestant parades are organised by politico-religious organisations like the Freemason type organisation Orange Order and the Apprentice Boys (see Ruane & Todd 1996, Huttunen 1995), and they celebrate military victories, honour religious faith and show peaceful demonstrating with martial displays (Jarman 2000, 159-160). Jarman writes that "Parading is one of the few public occasions that can bring together all sections of the Protestant and unionist community, where social, political and religious differences are tentatively ignored in the interests of a united celebration of history, culture and power" (Jarman 2000, 159). The biggest parading event of the year is the parade of Twelft of July to reminisce the battle of 1690 when the King William of Orange defeated the Catholic troops in Boyne. During that time of the year the British flags are hung everywhere and the colours of the Union Jack are painted on the route of the parade. The most important day for the Catholics is the Saint Patrick´s Day in March, but Catholics have been forced to celebrate more with restraint. Especially in the past security measures were much tighter during Catholic festivals. Parading times have been inflammable occasions that often burst into big riots. (Huttunen 1995.)

Thus, even though the peace process had continued already for eight years, the wounds of the Troubles were still not completely healed. In addition to the bitterness that some people felt towards the other community, there was also a lot of mistrust caused by the misuse of law and the unsustainable use of state violence against sections of the society (Hayes & Campbell 2005, 35). The bitterness towards the police was especially high among the Catholics, they felt themselves as oppressed victims: traditionally the police force has consisted mainly of Protestants and even in 2006 still only 17% of the policemen were Catholics (El País 27.2.2006). The Northern Ireland regiment in Stormont was reassembled in 2000, but further on it was again suspended over an argument considering paramilitary decommissioning. There were suspicions on the part of the British government and the unionists that the IRA was not sufficiently willing to co-operate, because for a long time it did not agree to the decommissioning demands (Höglund 2004, McAuley 2003). Since the beginning of the peace process, the more extreme political parties had been more popular in elections than the moderate parties. (Höglund 2004, 120.) One example is the

Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) that has been associated with the paramilitary group Ulster Volunteer Force. This has activated politically many working class Protestants who have usually stayed excluded from the political domain. (McAuley 2003.)

Even though much less intense, the conflict was still reality for many people in Northern Ireland in 2006. People who were not personally touched by it acknowledged its existence through the news that still very much concentrated on paramilitary activities and conflict-laden questions of domestic policy. Even after the peace process had started the violence continued. Both loyalist and republican groups had committed violent acts, but these had not been interpreted as cease-fire breaches. Shootings, mutilations, beatings, intimidation and exiling citizens within both communities continued and were even intensified during the peace process. (Höglund 2004, 95.) All paramilitary organisations had not consented to commit to the Belfast Agreement, and especially some loyalist groups had continued with violent confrontations and murders after 1998. The victims were mostly either political opponents, police or military personnel or people from within the same paramilitary group who were attacked as a result of internal disagreements. (IMC 2006, 25-30.) The latter took place especially among the Protestants. Some groups, like the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF), had not participated in the peace process at any stage (Höglund 2004, 119). On the 10 September 2005 there was a big riot organised by the UDA and the UVF which included vehicle hijacking, gunfire and the use of last bombs and petrol bombs (IMC 2006, 22-24). It was the most violent incident that had occurred since the Good Friday Agreement 1998 and the unrests lasted for three weeks. Curiously enough, it was the first time during the conflict that the police used its armed forces to protect the Catholics from Protestant demonstrators. (El País 27.2.2006.)

A significant issue was the IRA decommissioning 28.7.2005, which virtually ended organised republican paramilitary violence, some dissident republican groups and individuals excluded (IMC 2006). The Independent Monitoring Commission noted, though, that the paramilitaries still exercised significant control over many areas in Northern Ireland, which could make the restoration of normal policing and justice system difficult in these areas. Additionally, exiling as a means of control still took place among republican groups as well as among loyalists. The Independent Monitoring Commission also stated that under this period all the paramilitary organisations were involved in illegal activities to a varying extent: in addition to terrorism these activities included money laundering, smuggling and selling of illicit goods, drug dealing and other organised crime. (IMC 2006.)

However, in the spring 2006 the life of civilians in Northern Ireland was peaceful and normal for the most part, and a lot had been done in order to repair the damages done in the past. The state had

organised programmes for victims and survivors of the Troubles, and many of the laws, which might have had an adverse effect on some sections of the society in the past, were being reconsidered by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (Hayes & Campbell 2005, 36). There were also many individual initiatives for reconciliation taking place and for many people, the desire to forgive and forget was strong. One example of this increased reconciliation spirit was a BBC documentary series "Facing the Truth", launched in the spring 2006, which documented encounters of parties that had committed homicides during the Troubles with the family of the deceased. The program was first of its kind and it caused a heated discussion in the public. There were arguments both for and against it. Many people expressed their wishes to continue with such efforts that helped to restore the society and to attain a lasting peace, like the following quote from Belfast Telegraph illustrates: "..they [BBC] exposed the dreadful depth of suffering that continues in our midst after 30 years, and the need for people not only to tell their stories but also to be heard with dignity and respect." And: "There is every argument for the creation of a 'safe place' in private where the pain and the poison of our years of horror can be expunged as a beginning to the real healing process. Facing our truth will not be easy, but it has to be done." (Belfast Telegraph 11.3.2006.) There were also many people who were upset by the program and said that it was still too soon to reconcile –if it would ever be possible– the pain was still too great for that. In the following, S. Ó. Leogáin expresses his opinion about one of the encounters in Saoirse - Irish Freedom (January 2006, 12): "Meehan may have forgiven his Brit killer friend, the people of Ardoyne will not and those of us who don't push the Provo [Provisional IRA] line, well, our opinion is something that the BBC will not seek." And further: "Who dares to say forget the past? I don't. Those terrible deeds carried out to force British occupation on our country and our people should never be forgotten."

The majority of the Northern Protestants have accepted their status as a part of a bigger state and have not yearned for independence. In general they have not shared the idea of one Irish nation. According to a poll carried out in 2003, 94% of the Protestants in Northern Ireland saw united Republic of Ireland as an unacceptable option, whereas 71% considered British direct rule acceptable (see Irwin 2005). Many still saw the unification only as a way to higher levels of unemployment, restrictive laws and lower standards of living. Strong stereotypes of the Southerners as rural, culturally different people have existed among Protestants in Northern Ireland. (Ruane & Todd 1996, 256-260.) The attitudes of the Northern Catholics have also been ambivalent: even though they feel culturally and religiously similar to the Southerners, many of them have felt abandoned by the South and left alone in a difficult position. Many of them have also adopted Protestant ways of living. (Ruane & Todd 1996, 256-260.) Still most of them have wished to be a

part of a united Republic of Ireland: in 2003 58% of the Catholics in Northern Ireland regarded it to be an acceptable solution. Even more desirable –or perhaps simply more realistic- to the Catholics was a shared rule between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland: 63% were in favour of that solution. (see Irwin 2005.)

Ruane and Todd have noted that sometimes the feeling of cultural marginalisation of their respective main cultures is uniting the Protestants and Catholics of Northern Ireland (Ruane & Todd 1996). This was also visible in the results of this poll: despite all the differences in the opinions of the two communities there was also common ground, the vast majority of both communities saw power sharing in a local assembly as an acceptable option (see Irwin 2005). The survey that Ruane and Todd conducted 1996 showed that already then, there were Catholics in Northern Ireland who had a British identity and accordingly also Protestants who had an Irish identity and were open to a united Ireland. All in all, the Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland have a lot in common: they have e.g. many common traditions, attitudes and values. (Ruane & Todd 1996, Huttunen 1995) Both groups also distinguish between people from Northern Ireland and people from outside because of the special characteristics of the region (Ruane & Todd 1996, 77-78). It has to be kept in mind, that in many places in Northern Ireland, especially in the countryside, Protestants and Catholics have been able to live in peace with each other even during the conflict. In the spring 2006 it seemed that people started to accept the idea of peaceful coexistence more widely. El País wrote (27.2.2006) that there were even Protestants connected to the loyalist paramilitaries who asked for help with social matters from the IRA. Thus, in general the spirit of reconciliation seemed to be high in Northern Ireland and there were many people, including active members, who wanted to end the violent rule of the paramilitaries (IMC 2006, 7).

4. Research design

4.1 Research questions

Sectarian attitudes have been at the core of this conflict. Views on dealing with societal issues and with different sections of society have been largely affected by them. Therefore my one of my objectives is to examine what the level of sectarianism is among my research participants. I am interested to see, whether or not they wish to keep Northern Ireland as a segregated society. I will examine their hopes and expectations for the advancement of the peace process and for the resolution of the conflict. The focus will be on how they perceive their own role and the role of young people in general as agents in the process of developing Northern Ireland society.

Jean Whyte has noted that even though adolescents are typically not very interested in politics, in a society where politics influences the sructures of everyday life, even adolescents might take an interest in politics (Whyte 1998, 608). Northern Ireland is one of those societies and thus, I want to examine whether the attitudes of young people in Northern Ireland differ from the attitutes of young people in other Western countries in terms of politics. By political action I do not mean only participation in parliamentary organisations but also sectarian activities that have a political ideology as their background. I also want to see if there are other forms of social participation motivated by the conflict, like participation in NGOs and other civil society organisations.

4.2 Conducting interviews

4.2.1 Why thematic interviewing?

Vesa Puuronen has noted that youth is methodologically a special group to study, because young people tend to object to adult authorities. Thus, such methods seem to be most suitable in youth research, that allow direct communication between the researcher and the research participants. As an example he mentions interviewing, which I have used in this study. (Puuronen 1997, 9.) Sirkka Hirsjärvi and Helena Hurme have pointed out that if the research participants are young people, it is important for them to feel that the researcher is genuinely interested in their opinions (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 132-133). This is particularly relevant in this study, since it involves delicate issues and information that can even be dangerous to reveal. For getting the respondents to agree with the research and to take part in it, it is extremely important to build up a confidential relationship, which can best be done on an interpersonal level. Considering the limited time that I had in Northern Ireland, interviewing was the most suitable option.

Another reason for choosing this method was the objective of the study. My intention was not simply to acquire factual information about young people and the conflict *per se*, but more to focus on their opinions and meanings that they themselves give to things, phenomena and events. Interviews were a good method for my purpose, because they can help to reveal both facts and meanings of things (Alasuutari 2001, 148). By interviewing it is possible to discover different levels of thinking and motives that lie behind the responses. Since interviewing is direct interaction, during an interview session it is possible to deepen the information of the responses by asking further questions. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001.) The interviewees can also point out new themes that the researcher has not previously considered or taken into account at all. This would not be possible e.g. when using questionnaires. As mentioned earlier, most of the studies done on young people in Northern Ireland have been conducted using questionnaires, thus this study can offer a new perspective on the issue.

Hirsjärvi and Hurme write that there are several types of interviews that are suitable for different purposes. Semi-structured, thematic interviews have certain guidelines set, but not the whole structure of the interview. In contrast with structured interviews, thematic interviews leave space for the respondents to use their own words and expressions when answering. Instead of asking specific, detailed questions, the interviews are based on themes. The purpose is not to be attached to the researchers perspectives only, but to highlight different kinds of interpretations and connotations that the interviewees might have. Additionally, "wrong kinds of reactions" can be noticed and further questions can be used to reach a full understanding of the intended subject of the questions. The form and structure of the interview can vary: it is flexible in the sense that with different people various themes can be discussed in different order. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001). Smyth & al. (2004, 95) who are among the few that have used semi-structured interviews as their method with young people in Northern Ireland, found that some of the issues raised during the interviews were unexpected, and that their results were diverse and complex due to the method.

4.2.2 Empirical data

I spent six weeks in Belfast in the spring 2006. During this time my plan was to find young people for the interviews by visiting different youth clubs. I had a directory with a long listing of youth clubs in Belfast so I thought that the task would not be too difficult. Unfortunately it turned out that it was not that simple: in many of the addresses there was no trace of a youth club, and in those addresses, where a youth club actually existed it was in most cases. An acquaintance of mine who was a teacher tried to help me by talking to the headmasters of two schools, but it would have taken too long for me to get a permission to interview pupils. Finally I managed to organise a few

interviews through personal contacts and the rest of them I made in a youth centre and in a residential house, where the tenants were predominantly young people.

I interviewed altogether 15 young people between the ages of 13 and 18 living in the area of Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland. The data in this thesis consists of thirteen interviews and two shorter commentaries. Ten of the interviewees were male and five of them were female. I wanted to have as an equal number of Protestants and Catholics as possible, and I ended up interviewing seven Protestants and eight Catholics. Most of the young people belonged to my target group, which was 14-18-year-olds. One of the interviewees made only a shorter commentary due to lack of time and I was not able to interview her fully. In addition to these, there is also a commentary from a male whose age was between 20-25 years old. I included him into the study because he was very eager to tell me about his experiences with the paramilitaries and his interview contained information that was very useful for understanding the relationship between many young people and the paramilitaries in Belfast. Such information was extremely hard to acquire, not because that sort of experiences would have been rare, but because the nature of it was very sensitive. His interview was very valuable for my research. He also assured me that the things he told me had happened to him when he was still underaged.

The average duration of one interview was 45 minutes. The type of the interview was determined by the situation, the environment and the amount of time available. I interviewed five persons individually, six persons in pairs and with four people I had a group interview. As I was a stranger to the interviewees, I could sense a certain level of formality and even timidity in the replies of the persons whomI interviewed individually. Since our relationship was forced to stay formal, they probably did not feel secure enough to share very personal or sensitive information or experiences with me. It would have been an ideal situation if I had been able to create a more long-standing and confidential relationship with the interviewees before making the interviews. This is especially important with adolescents, who are in such a phase of life where certain level of distance to adults is part of the picture (also Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 132).

Beforehand I thought that because of the sensitive nature of the subject, it would be best to interview everyone individually. However, when I due to lack of time was forced to do a group interview, I noticed that actually the company of others encouraged the interviewees to talk more and in fact they had multifaceted and versatile conversations where different arguments were set. In these conversations the interviewees went a lot deeper in the subjects than solely my questions proposed. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001, 63) also write that since children are often shy in interview situations, group interviews have been found to be more effective than individual interviews and

they are often used with children. The negative side of the group/pair interviews was that the participants sometimes interpreted the questions to each other and sometimes there was even a rapid change of a comment because of the reactions of the other participants. The interviewee wanted to sustain a feeling of agreement with the others and give "socially acceptable" responses. We can see this in the following sequence:

Q: What do you think about immigrants in Northern Ireland

R: I don't really think much of it, I don't think we've got a big pile of them here in Northern Ireland

[other interiew participants talking all at the same time]

R: They're coming over here, taking our land, taking our money and taking our hospital places

[Someone else]: Taking our jobs, taking our money

R: Taking our stuff from our government

A similar change of opinion was found in a pair interview with two girls:

Q: What do you think that future in Northern Ireland will be like?

R1: I think it's gonna be the same as it is now

R2: Can get worse, though. I think that it will get worse though

R1: I think that it will be the same but a lot will get a wee bit bad. The Troubles are gonna get a lot worse, it's gonna escalate

Heli Vaaranen has noticed the same phenomenon (2002, 23): she studied groups of young men and noticed that often during group interviews their responses became more boastful. A Northern Irish researcher Siobhán McEwoy has pointed out that the level of aspiration to consensus within the group reveals the degree of freedom of expression that is determined by the participants' ecologies. In her study the research participants who expressed the least dissent were those that came from conflict interface zones and had the least educational opportunities (McEwoy 2000, 102). My experiences of these types of situations were also with those research participants who had the weakest educational prospects. Since they all lived in a very conflict-affected area, I suggest that this might have something to do with strong paramilitary supervision and with the need to maintain strong ties within the community. Another difficulty with group interviews is that while the interview situation is more conversational, the discussion sometimes gets carried away from the real subject of the interview (also Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001). In this case it happened particularly easily, because the participants were friends and knew each other well beforehand.

The least successful way of interviewing, in my opinion, was interviewing such young people

together, who did not know each other very well beforehand. Because of the political nature of the questions it is understandable that they did not want to reveal too much about themselves and their experiences to local people, whom they did not know well. It could have even posed a threat in some cases. Some interviewees expressed clearly that they did not want to talk about some matters because they considered it to be too dangerous. Majority (eleven) of the young people that I interviewed lived in Protestant and Catholic working-class areas, where there was a strong paramilitary presence and the paramilitaries had a considerable control over the local community. Four of the interviewees lived in a same, mixed neighbourhood in the surroundings of Belfast, which was a more affluent area and where the paramilitary groups were not quite as dominant.

4.2.3 My own role

Before actually entering the "field" I had to reflect my role as a researcher. This was important for me, since I had been working with young people as a youth worker before, and now I had to enter the same field in a different role. As a youth worker I had also had some difficulties in defining my role, because being at the age of 24, I still was not very much older than the eldest persons who I had been working with. Additionally, from my appearance one can think that I am even younger than that. I was aware of these questions also in this research context and I realised that with my appearance and attire, I had to decide and indicate whether I would take a more distant, clearly adult role as a researcher or whether I would simply go there in my normal appearance as the young and youthful looking person that I am. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001, 69) advice that the researcher should always look as "normal" as possible and should not be too distinctive. They point out that besides the role of the interviewer, the researcher simultaneously has other roles that can be, among others, socially higher, equal or lower (ibid. 98). Vesa Puuronen has affirmed that young people mostly are not willing to co-operate with researchers if they associate them with the adult world of institutions (Puuronen 1997, 9-10). Anneli Larsson (2005, 13-16) has stated that children are very sensitive to the social pressure of being interviewed by authority figures, which might affect their answers. Thus, I decided that looking young would probably also make the young people feel more comfortable with me and I preferred to hold a socially equal role to my interviewees and to enter the youth clubs in a casual manner.

Thus my only concern was if the youth would take me and the interviews seriously enough. Gladly my fears were not realised. It seemed to awake a certain level of respect in the youngsters that I was studying in a university and that I was doing research for my Master's thesis. They also wanted know more about my studies and about the thesis: "What do you study? Do you study politics?" "What will you do with the interviews" "How long does your thesis have to be?" "Why are you

doing this?" "Why did you choose Northern Ireland and the Troubles?". They also asked questions about Finland and about the conflicts and paramilitaries there. Earlier, when I had been working with children in England and Germany, I had noticed patronising attitudes in the children because of my imperfect language skills. Now I did not have this problem, because the youngsters were old and mature enough to understand my position as a foreigner. They also tried to help me with linguistic problems either by speaking as clearly and correctly as possible, or by reinterpreting the slang words so that they would be comprehensible to me. There remained some sentences that I did not understand completely, but mostly I still could catch the main idea of the answer. The adolescents were able to understand my English well, but sometimes the words and terms that I used were too academic and literary, and they did not understand the meaning of the terms before I explained them in other words.

My own role as a foreigner was as well an advantage as a disadvantage. Clearly, because I had not been to Northern Ireland before I was not as familiar with the society, its history and the local way of life as I would have been had I done the research in Finland. Vaaranen (2002, 20) has commented that conducting fieldwork requires expertise from the researcher because one can not expect the research participants to teach the researcher and, on the other hand, the researcher's unawareness distracts the communication between the researcher and the research participants during the interview. Hence, I studied literature concerning Northern Ireland and made myself familiar also with cultural products such as Internet-sites, tv-programs, music, magazines and newspapers. I also had many conversations with local people. Even though I think I understand the responses of my interviewees and their meanings, there are probably connotations that I simply cannot detect and contexts that I do not realise, which affects the level of depth in my analysis.

On the other hand, I do not have to carry the "burden" of first-hand knowledge or past experiences of the conflict with me. I can try to aim for objectivity in a different level than local researchers. Scholars are also part of the social world, which they study. Thus they occupy a certain position in it with certain view of the world which is coloured by things like past experiences, class, ethnic group and gender. In the case of Northern Ireland this means that the majority of the local scholars who write about their community belong to either one of the two groups. Even with a desire to aim at objectivity, the cultural and political heritage is always present in the decisions made and in the way that the researcher sees the social reality: local researchers can be "too close to the problem" (Cairns 1996, 25). Cairns has also mentioned that in such societies where there is a political conflict it may be considered immoral not to take a political stand as a professional (ibid., 23). I think that for the interviews with young people being a foreigner was a very positive thing. Hopefully the fact that I was an outsider encouraged my interviewees to respond more honestly, since there was no

pressure to give answers that are "socially acceptable" in their own community. As I was a foreigner they probably did not see me as a potential threat in the same way, since I most likely did not know the people that they knew, I was not engaged in the local events and I would soon return to Finland. Had I been local and belonged to either one of the communities, it most likely would not have been possible to carry out the study in a similar manner.

4.2.4 Ethical questions

Because of the sensitivity of the subject I also had to do some ethical reflection. At some points I wondered if I put the youngsters in a difficult position by asking them questions that were too intimate and personal and that they felt uncomfortable answering. I always made it clear to everyone in the beginning of the interview that they did not have to answer any of the questions they did not feel comfortable with. However, especially with the youngest interviewees I sensed that since I was an adult and hence some kind of an authority to them, they were not quite sure if they were allowed not to answer something that I had asked. There were two aspects that I in particular needed to take into consideration. One of them was the possible danger in which the adolescents could be in after revealing sensitive information. I was not too concerned about this, because I knew that I would foster the interview tapes very carefully and, of course, any personal or too specific details would not be revealed in the actual thesis. I also always asked for their consent to publish their comments anonymously in my thesis before beginning the interview.

The other fact that I was more concerned about, was the psychological state of the interviewees. I did not know if the adolescents who had experienced violent incidents had had any kind of psychological aid because of them or if they even had ever talked with anyone about these incidents. I tried to watch the reactions of the interviewees as they were answering the questions and I tried to anticipate the "sensitive spots". In many cases I did not ask further questions about subjects that in otherwise would have interested me and probably also would have offered a lot of valuable information, because I wanted to protect the young person from a too distressing situation. As Cairns (1996, 17-18) has noted, doing research on ethically challenging matters often means compromising between scientific and technical requirements. In general I thought that my standard questions could not pose a threat to anyone psychologically, since the Troubles and the things connected to them were very much everyday knowledge and a common discourse in the Belfast life.

Some interviewees talked about very difficult matters and hard experiences that they had had. During these interviews I kept thinking if I should ask the interviewees if they had been able to talk with any professional about these matters, but unfortunately the situation was over before I got to

that point. These interviewees seemed to be very pleased, though, that they could talk about their experiences because they were being very open about them. Telling about one's experiences to someone who wants to listen can also be therapeutic (e.g. Alasuutari 2001). Probably for these interviewees letting "the world" know about the injustices, atrocities and losses that they had suffered from was a way to acquire some personal justice. Possibly and probably in these cases, as in many others as well, it was the only way.

4.3 The process of analysis

I started the analysis by making thematic categories based on the interview themes. I went through the entire interview data by classifying the interviews in such a way that every comment was included in some category. Some comments included information that touched two themes, in such cases the same comment was classified in two categories. When every comment was included in at least one category I started a systematic analysis of the cathegories. At this point I also decided to combine some categories and make a new, wider one if there were only a few comments in the original categories. I went through the different responses in each category and made notes on the similarity and frequency of certain themes. Based on this I made new groups for the comments in each category and divided the responses in each category into these groups. If some themes seemed to be connected, I compared the responses of these two categories to examine whether or not it was the case. This seemed to be effective in the case of sectarian atttudes vs. contacts with the other side, which I will discuss more in detail in the following chapter.

I treated the young people that I interviewed as one group in accordance to their age and to the social position that they thus occupied, especially considering their (dis)ability to participate in political processes. Even though they all had individual circumstances in life, one thing that they did share wer the specific conditions that growing up in this historical period of time in Belfast had offered them. Thus, I evaluated them as a group of representatives of youth in the beginnig of the 21st century. By doing so I wanted to see, what this study will reveal about the coherence or incoherence of this specific group of youth. Nonetheless, my analysis was based on the notion that different kinds of youths existed, which I discussed in the chapter 2. Hence, as important as it was to see what the young people had in common, it was also crucial to see in what kinds of things there were disparities and to consider the reasons behind them. I counted the frequencies of the different responses to see whether there were significant differences between the genders or, on the other hand, between Protestants and Catholics. I also wanted to keep the different socio-economic backgrounds and other factors of their ecologies in mind that might have influenced their world views and opinions. However, since I have only interviewed 15 young people, the results of this

study can by no means be perceived as statistically representative. They describe the attitudes and lives of this specific group of young people. Therefore, they should be seen only as indicators of some tendencies that possibly exist on a wider scale in the Northern Ireland society.

I compared the comments of my interviewees with data and results from previous studies of young people in Northern Ireland. On the other hand, I compared the results with Finnish studies about young people and their political agency. Comparing the attitudes towards politics of the interviewees to the attitudes of Finnish young people can reveal something about the fact, if living in the midst of a conflict-affected society politicises young people in a different way than living in a peaceful society. Finnish youth provide a good basis for comparison with young people from Northern Ireland, because despite the conflict, the two societies are in many ways similar. As Jari-Erik Nurmi (1998, 5-6) has stated, despite each having their own cultures and institutional structures, European countries are closely linked to each other, especially now that most of them are part of the European Union and share common economical and political agendas. Nurmi writes that sharing a common background in significant societal changes like the World War II and the radicalism of the 1960s, and having such societal phenomena as free market economy, rapid urbanisation and environmental problems, has lead to "the creation of a special set of values and beliefs, and a worldview, that characterizes western European adolescents' thinking" (ibid. 7). Within western Europe, the United Kingdom and Finland are also in many cases seen to share the same Northern European cultural atmosphere characterised by political liberalism and Protestant religions and similar values (ibid, 5). Although there are slight distinctions, both countries also run their politics on the basis of building the society on the values of a welfare society. The media and new information technologies, especially the Internet, also "make the world smaller" and homogenise the experiences of young people throughout the world (e.g. Fornäs 1998). As already previously discussed, the consumer markets address a big part of their products to youth and thus also create a "superficial sameness" among youth all over (Wyn & White 1997, 2). As Wyn & White summarise: "the *processes* affecting young people in advanced capitalist countries are similar" (ibid. 7). Consequently, it can be argued that despite the conflict, in many ways the living environments and experiences of youth in Northern Ireland and in Finland are quite similar.

5. Young people in Belfast and the conflict

5.1 Ups and downs of life in Belfast

Most of the interview participants seemed to be satisfied with their current lives. When I asked about the good and the bad things in their lives, eight young people answered that there was nothing bad in their lives at the moment. Many of them felt that everything was good in their lives. Positive things that the young people mentioned were e.g. friends, sport, school, family, independence and having a carefree life. They were also asked about their biggest dreams and fears. The interview participants dreamt about things that young people all over the world dream about: being rich, being famous, having a good place to live in, having a family or a nice car.

Greatest fears included being poor, living on the street, having a bad job, living in a bad area in Belfast and being socially isolated. It has often been noted that family is very important to people in Northern Ireland, and my interviews also confirmed this. Only a few young people mentioned that there were negative things in their lives and of these things almost all were related to troublesome family relationships. It was distressing to be away from the family, to fight with your brother or that parents were arguing. Most of the interview participants told me that they had a good and confidential relationship with at least one adult in their family. Some said that they were best friends with their parents. The most common fear among the interview participants was losing a family member or someone close to you. It was clear that some of these young people lived in difficult social conditions. Two of them told me that they did not get on with their families at all and thus they lived apart from them. One young male said that even though he now had a better relationship with his father, he had been on his own for most of his life. Another boy's biggest fear was that his mother would pass away and that he would be left alone with his father and this would mean that he would get fostered.

There were also two male interview participants who felt that there was only one good thing in their lives. For the first one it was having a place to live. He told me that he had not seen his family in two years. Presumably a place to live was not a given to him as he was still under aged. His biggest fear was that he would loose this place and then he would have nowhere to live. The second young male seemed to be very unsatisfied with his life in general. He had dropped out of school and was unemployed. He also lived in an interface-area where there were lots of violent sectarian incidents and, in addition to the unemployment, a lot of his frustration seemed to be caused by the unrests in the area.

Q: Is there something that you are unsatisfied with at the moment in your life?

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R: Everything, in general. Nothing to do. [unclear] There's too much trouble going about, too much people get into trouble. In the long run it can't be good where I live, because what do our police ever do in the country? You phone them up when somebody has beaten you up around your house [unclear] and what do they do after? They take a few names and addresses and that's the last you hear of them. So, you know what I mean? (Protestant male, 17)

Only one person mentioned spontaniously the conflict when I asked the interviewees about the good and the bad things in their lives and about their dreams and fears. Most answers would have been normal for any teenager in any part of the world, the conflict did not seem to be a strong factor in their everyday lives. However, two research participants mentioned unrests and violence in Northern Ireland as disturbing. Their dream was to move away to some place where it was more peaceful.

Q: If your dreams were fulfilled, what would your life be like?

R: Live away as far as possible, away from this country and [unclear] live in peace, away from the rioting, away from the Troubles and all that. (Protestant male, 14)

Both of these young males lived in an interface area, where sectarian violence was commonplace.

Studies have revealed that religion has been very important to people in Northern Ireland. This was, however, not the case with my interview participants. Only three of the interview participants expressed that religion was important to them whereas five of them said that they were not religious at all. The rest of them seemed fairly indifferent the subject and gave answers such as: "It's just religion. It's just the way it is."

5.2 Young people and sectarianism

5.2.1 Characteristics of Protestants and Catholics

In order to understand their attitudes towards sectarianism, I wanted to see whether the research participants thought that the two groups were essentially different. If this was the case, I wanted to know on what kinds of things they thought that the differences were based. The interview participants were asked to describe their spontaneous images of Catholics and Protestants. I was interested to see, whether the other group would be described with different kinds of definitions and seen as very deviant from the own group. The young people were also asked, whether they thought that Protestants and Catholics lived different lives in Northern Ireland.

I discovered that all in all, my interview participants thought that there were not that many substantial differences between Catholics and Protestants. Most of them thought that basically they were all the same people and that they had similar qualities, e.g. they were both Christians and that

if Catholics were bitter so were Protestants bitter as well. Even if they were seen as opponents, many young people thought that fundamentally their aims and objectives were alike, they were simply two opposing groups with conflicting interests, competing for the same resources.

> Q: If I say the word Catholic, what do you think of?
>
> R: Catholics are just like Protestants, we're all just trying to fight for the same thing for only two different reasons, you know what I mean? They're trying to fight to get over at Protestants and Protestants are trying to fight and get over at Catholics. (Protestant male, 17)

A common opinion among the research participants was that ultimately the two groups were very similar and that their differences made them opponents. Often their relationship was described with dichotomies; if there was a special characteristic connected to one group, often there was an equivalent characteristic connected to the other group as well. These could be terms of abuse, nationalist ideologies or football clubs that they supported (see Table 1).

Table 1

Protestants	Catholics
Prods	Teaks
Unionism	Nationalism
England	Ireland
British	Irish
Rangers	Celtics
United Kingdom	Republic of Ireland

The majority of the interview participants thought that the biggest differences between Catholics and Protestants were religious, as the teachings of the two Churches are different. It was mentioned that the Catholics have nuns and priests and they believe in Our Lady whereas the Protestants do not. Generally this seemed to be perseived as a neutral thing, which did not have to cause problems between the two groups because there were no references to this. Only one Protestant male reminded that the word Protestant means someone who is against the Roman Catholic Church and that the division of the religions was rooted in discordance.

Many Protestant interview participants connected the words Protestant and Catholic to strong denominationalism and to cultural symbols and practices such as the day of the 12th of July, the Battle of Boyne, the parades and Orangemen. None of the Catholics mentioned neither Protestant nor Catholic cultural denominationalism. The Protestants who talked about these could list several Protestant cultural symbols, but only one person mentioned a Catholic equivalent, which was the shamrock. This seems to suggest that the Catholic cultural practices are not as salient as the

Protestant were. As the minority, possibly the Catholic community was more concentrated on political issues. With nationalist/political ideologies the situation was that, indeed, the Catholic equivalents were mentioned in the same context with the Protestant ones. Sports was also mentioned as a dividing factor: Catholics supported the Celtics in football, whereas the favourite team of Protestants was Rangers.

It was obvious that most of these young people had learned to conceive these two groups as different because most of them could mention some qualities associated with one group or the other. Three interviewees, however, were exceptions because they refused to differentiate between Catholics and Protestants in any way. Two of them were Catholics and one was Protestant. All of them stressed that both Catholics, as well as Protestants, were simply ordinary people. It was a conscious choice for this Protestant girl not to use these categorisations because she was against segregation:

> Q: If I say to you the word Protestant, what do you think of?
>
> R: I don't like saying I'm Protestant, I just like saying that I'm a Christian. There's too much [unclear] between Catholics and Protestants and religion. And if I say that I'm a Protestant that can actually start a lot of trouble. (Protestant female, 15)

5.2.2 Living different lifes?

Furthermore, even though nearly all of the interview participants had some opinions on whether or not Catholics and Protestants were similar and what they were like, when they were asked the question "Do you think that the life of the Protestants differs from the life of the Catholics here?" some of them were not able to answer it. This young Catholic had been to a mixed school for five years and had Protestant friends but still he said that he did not now about the Protestant lifestyle:

> Q: Do you think that the life of the Protestants differs from the life of the Catholics here?
>
> R: I don't know. I don't know where the Protestants live, you know what I mean? I can't say. (Catholic male, 17)

A Catholic female who also had Protestant friends gave a similar answer. In addition, she had also dated a Protestant boy and worked together with Protestants. It seems that these contacts had not been profound enough to provide good knowledge of the other community; also she commented that "you do not really know Protestants well". Correspondingly, one of the young Protestants who declared that he hated Catholics and spoke with negative words about them had to admit when answering this question that he actually did not know anything about the differences between the two groups. He had hardly ever been in contact with Catholics. In the study of Sinclair et al. the research participants were supposed to play the role of someone from a different community. These

young people, as well, noticed that it was difficult because they were unfamiliar with the habits of the other community due to their little contact. In the following section I will examine in greater detail the relationship between familiarity with the other community and tolerance/prejudices towards it.

According to five interview participants the Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland lived basically in the same way. In their opinion there were no significant differences in their lifestyles. On the other hand, many thought that the two groups were different because of power relations and unequal opportunities. Young people from both sides felt that the other group had more power, although there was only one Catholic that mentioned it in comparison to four Protestants. However, there was also one Protestant who referred indirectly to the issue that Protestants had more power over the Catholics.

One Catholic female thought that there was a big difference in the standard of living between Catholics and Protestants:

> Q: Do you think that the life of the Protestants differs from the life of the Catholics in Northern Ireland? Do they live different lives, different kinds of lives?
>
> R: Yes they do. See, Protestants like to go clubbing all the time. And they make loads and loads of money, more than Catholics. I work and I see it. They make really- They have lots and lots of money and then they all wear brand clothes and they have really big [unclear] and they have loads and loads of jewellery, if you know what I mean. They make loads and loads of money, more than Catholics do. And I think that's really making a difference. They really do live differently. Like shop assistants don't have- like in the East [Belfast], they're living in the East and they have their parents to go and buy them houses and all that. So I think that they do live differently. (Catholic female, 18)

A Protestant girl commented that there was more prejudice towards Catholics. She thought that Catholics could live well and get on with their lives only in some areas. Some Protestant males, in turn, felt strongly that Protestants were being discriminated. They thought that Catholics had more power and they were being favoured at Protestants' expense. Some of them thought that Catholics "get anything they want". An important issue seemed to be their concern over the housing policy. These young Protestants felt that Catholics were given all the best residential areas and good houses in Belfast. Therefore Protestants were, according to them, being "pushed back" because the authorities let Catholics take over new housing estates and this meant that Protestants needed to move to a new area as well.

> R: The Peters [the police] take Prods and just let them [Catholics] move in. They let the Teaks walk all over us. (Protestant male, 14)
>
> R: The Teaks are moving down again, they're starting to put us down to [unclear] They're strating to take over the area because the government is letting them, you know what I mean? We're going to be pushed back and they'll walk all over us. (Protestant male, 17)

A 17-year-old young man explained that the situation was caused by the fact that Catholics had better politicians in the government and this resulted in a situation where the two groups did not have equal possibilities. Apparently, in his opinion, politics was clearly divided along the sectarian division and only politicians from "the own" side could make decisions that were beneficial to someone.

> Q: Do you think that the life of the Protestants differs from the life of the Catholics here?
>
> R: I think that they [Catholics] have upper hand in the government and they get out with the [unclear] It's fair enough that the government has only started to change now. We have only started to get the good houses and the money put in our name but they've done that already years back. They've got all the good houses all over the marine port and they've got the place in [name of an area] Just because it all runs through the government and they have better people in it really. It doesn't work, you know what I mean? It should be equal, 50-50 chance. You just split the money and you´re down with it. (Protestant male, 17)

It should be noted that all these young Protestants who felt oppressed, especially in housing policy, came from families with a low socio-economical status. They lived in a working class neighbourhood that is among the most deprived in Northern Ireland.

5.2.3 We and "the others"

The prevalent social psychological line of research in Northern Ireland leans on Tajfel's social identity theory as their theoretical base in explaining the conflict (e.g. Roe & Cairns 1998). The main assumption in this theory is that social identity develops when an individual realises that he/she belongs to a group that is different from other groups. Prejudices are based on this idea of distinctiveness (e.g. Trew 2004, 515). Having read these studies I also presumed that the research participants would evaluate their own group with more positive definitions than the other group. I was wrong, only a minority of all the research participants did so. Most of them did not think more highly of neither of the groups but described them with quite neutral words. Two girls did even the contrary: they criticised members of their own group. This Catholic female thought that many Catholics were being prejudiced even though they did not have any real knowledge of it:

> Q: If I say to you the word Catholic, what do you think of?
>
> R: You can get some bitter Catholics, some Catholics can be a real pain in the butt. And say all things about Protestants and all that. You need to really know, see what that you associate with and all that. You see some Catholics that can be nice but Protestants - cause I ran away from Protestants and I like them but see some people in here are trying to be really, really bitter about Protestants and they don't like them at all, even though they don't know what Protestants are like. You just judge a book by their cover. (Catholic female, 18)

A Protestant female thought that there was a lot more prejudice and violence towards Catholics. Only one boy spoke of his own group merely with praise, he said that the word Protestant meant to him "DUP, like better housing. DUP, they give you good houses, they help you out". (Protestant male, 14)

Even though minority among my interview participants, there were also young people who spoke negatively about the other group. All three of them were young Protestant males that lived in an interface area and had plenty of experiences of political violence and other Troubles-related incidents. Most of the names that they called Catholics with were purely degrading. One of them explained their attitude to me with these words:

> R: We've been brought up to hate the Catholics. Everyone here has an opinion against them. Everyone here is not gonna like them. (Protestant male, 15)

Another boy confirmed indirectly this "collective hatred" in his comment:

> R: They're dirty, they smell and they get everything they want. And you just hate them. Nothing more to say. Just dirty people. (Protestant male, 14)

One of the Protestant males explained that he now hated Catholics even more after they put him out of his home. Even though all of them had had experiences of sectarian incidents, the others did not justify their hatred with bad experiences but left it unstated as if the hatred they felt was something natural and self-evident because they had been brought up to feel that way. The comment of the boy who had been put out of his home included the information that he had hated Catholics already before this experience. Next I will examine the sectarian attitudes of my interviewees more in detail.

5.2.4 Increasing contact, increasing tolerance

I wanted to know if the amount of contacts with the other group had an effect on the sectarian/non-sectarian opinions of the young people. I wanted to compare them to see, whether those young people who had the most contacts with the other group also felt the most positively about them and were the most against segregation. I created a three-level scale for the young people according to their sectarian/non-sectarian attitudes. This scale was based on their answers during the whole interview, but the main focus lay on the answers to these questions:

- How important is it to know the religious/political background of the people you get to know?

- What do you think about mixed education?

- Should different communities in your opinion live peacefully side by side?

- Would you like to get to know Catholics/Protestants better?

- Have you had a Protestant/Catholic girl/boyfriend? Could you have?

The different groups in my scale were 1) For segregation 2) It depends 3) Against segregation. A person was classified in the second group if his opinion was not strictly neither against nor for segregation but a little bit of both. Mostly these young people thought that the need to be segregated or not was situational and depended on the wider context.

I compared the attitudes with the amount of contacts that the person had had with the other group. I made a three-level scale of them as well. The levels were 1) Virtually no contact 2) Some contact 3) Plenty of contact. The placement of an interview participant in one of these groups depended on whether he lived in a mixed/segregated area, went to an integrated/segregated school and had or did not have any friends or acquintances from the other group.

As can be seen in Table 2, this comparison seems to support my assumption that increasing contact signifies increasing tolerance and non-sectarian attitudes. The four interview participants who could be classified as having had many contacts with the other group had all non-sectarian attitudes and were against segregation that is based on the denominational group that a person belonged to. Correspondingly, most of the young people that had virtually had no contact with members of the other community were in favour of maintaining segregation in the Northern Ireland society. Yet, the attitudes did not straightforwardly follow the amount of contacts, there were also young people who had not much familiarized themselves with the other side but were still anti-sectarian in their attitudes or at least were not in favour of complete segregation. Of those that had had some contact with the other group only one thought that segragation was a good solution; three of them were against segregation and the remaining three thought that in some situations segregation was a good thing but they did not support it as a principle. Obviously many factors influence the formation of such attitudes and the amount of contacts is only one of them. At the end of this section I will discuss other factors that are important when a young person is in the process of developing his worldview, of which such attitudes consist a part.

Table 2

	For segregation	It depends	Against segregation
Virtually no contact	2	1	
Some contact	1	3	3
Plenty of contact			4

There was hardly any difference to be found between the attitudes of Catholics and Protestants. Three Protestants and four Catholics were against segregation. Two Protestants were in the group It depends, correspondingly also two Catholics were classified to that group. Finally, in favour of segregation were two Protestants and one Catholic. There were no clear gender differences to be found, either. There were both males and females in each group. In addition, the differences in the amount of contacts between the two communities were not big, the Catholic research participants had been only slightly more in contact with the other community than their Protestant counterparts. It cannot be said that neither of the genders had been more active in familiarising with the other side.

5.2.4.1 Against segregation

The interview participants who had the most contact with the other group all highlighted that it did not matter to them at all, whether a person was Catholic or Protestant. There were also three young people who had had less contact with the other group but who nevertheless were against segregation. There were not any major differences to be found between the non-sectarian attitudes of Catholics and Protestants, they were quite evenly distributed. Of the seven research participants in this group four were Catholics and three were Protestants. Four of them were male and three were female. All of the research participants with a middle-class background belonged to this group, in addition there were two research participants with a working class background.

According to the interview participants there were good people on both sides and the people from the other group were not different at all, they were normal people equal to themselves. These young people also commented that other things were more important in life: a Protestant boy (16) said that people of his age rarely even discussed things like politics or religion, "it's just all having a good laugh and that's about it". What mattered to them and what they valued in people were things like their personalities and skills. This girl thought that it was only sad that there were people who tried to find out one's denominational group before getting to know them and she and her friends wanted to withdraw from such behaviour:

> R: Sometimes in [name of a place] when we're going in there'd be boys hanging about wearing track suits and everything and they'd be like: are you Catholic or Protestant and sometimes they use nasty names like are you a Prod or a Teak or something like this and you just sort of go [a signifying sigh]: Are you serious? You just sort of look at them and say: Stop that. It seems so pointless to find people who have to ask you that. So I just walk away from it and all my friends who go there would be like that as well, they would just walk away. (Protestant female, 15)

All of the interview participants in this group thought that integrated education was a good idea. They said that young people should learn already from young age not to be biased, they should

learn to make friends with everybody and to think that no differentiation was needed between Catholics and Protestants.

Although all of them thought in the same non-sectarian way and were in favour of integration, some of them reminded that the reality in Northern Ireland had not yet reached the point, where one could live ignoring entirely the denominational division that existed in the society. Despite his own tolerant and non-sectarian attitudes a 16-year-old Protestant male was quite skeptic about the future in Northern Ireland. He doubted that things would change in the near future and he said that he could not yet picture all the people in Northern Ireland living together in a mixed community. Another interview participant, in turn, remarked that even though the religious background of a person was not an obstacle, it was important to be aware of it in order to know whether or not they were by any means prejudiced. She also thought that it was a matter of trust and said that she had never met a person who would not have trusted her enough not to tell her, whether he was Catholic or Protestant. So at least in her case a person's religion still carried some significance after all, apparently for safety reasons.

5.2.4.2 It depends

The young people whom I had placed in this group had not biased attitudes, in other words, they had nothing against getting acquainted with people from the other group. They acknowledged that there were different people in the other community as well, they could not be stereotyped to be one homogenous group with similar characteristics. Two of the young people in this group were Protestants, two were Catholics. Three were male and one was female. All of them came from a working-class background and had lived all their lives in hard-line interface-areas, only the two Catholics had had more opportunities to get to know people from the other side. They had both been quite much involved with Protestants: both of them had Protestant friends and the other one had gone to an integrated school, whereas the other one worked with Protestants and had had a Protestant boyfriend. Both of the Protestants had always lived in a highly loyalist area and they had gone to an all-Protestant school so they had not had many opportunities in their lives to get to know Catholics. However, through a hobby another one of them had got to know a Catholic who "never thought of himself of being Catholic or Protestant, he just thought of himself of being a person" and they had become good friends despite their positions on the different sides of the sectarian division. The other one had not had any contacts with Catholics, or at least he did not know them at all, according to his own words. He pointed out that they did not have any opportunities to get to know each other because there was no such environment where encounters over sectarian borders could

take place. Similar complaints had been made by young people in other studies (Kelly 2002, 68; McGrellis 2005, 65).

Similarly to those interview participants who were against segregation but were being realistic of its possibilities in Northern Ireland, safety seemed to be the main reason why these interview participants thought that it was important to maintain a segregated system in some levels of society. All of them said that basically it was not very important to know the religious background of a person but they reminded that one needed to be careful, though.

> Q: How important is it to know the religious background of the people you get to know?
>
> R: It's not really important but see, some Protestants don't feel comfortable sitting around Catholics and some Catholics don't feel comfortable sitting around Protestants. And if you really get to know the Protestant person- the person tells you that they're Protestant and I tell the person that I'm Catholic and we get along well, it's ok. But some Protestants don't like Catholics and some Catholics don't like Protestants. (Catholic female, 18)

They stressed that as there were good people on the other side, there were also bad and dangerous people who might be backstabbers, who could set you up and get you beaten in their area. A Protestant male commented that although he believed that there were also good Catholics, they were probably "only a handful of them". He said that even though knowing a person's religion was not necessarily important, it was useful to know it because it could be used as a weapon: it was easier to offend someone if you knew his beliefs.

Some of them told about bad experiences that they had had with members of the other community. They had been called names and some of these situations had ended up in fights. For one girl one experience had been especially hard because she had previously thought that the perpetrators were her friends and thus she felt very betrayed and disappointed after the incident. The amount of contacts seemed to play a significant part in her feelings towards the other community. She told that due to these bad experiences she used to be very bitter and hate members of the other group but after she had made friends with some Protestants she was not worried about them anymore. The difficulty of trusting without knowing was also expressed in the Protestant males' responses, they said that they would not mind knowing more Catholics but acquainting was hindered by not being able to trust the acquintances before getting to know them well. They explained that the distrust was not only their problem: the Catholics would give the exactly same answer. Furthermore, another one of them specified that it was not only Catholics that could not be trusted before getting to know them but also the same thing was true of unknown people from other Protestant communities:

> R: Would I like to get to know anyone from [name of a Protestant area]? –No, because they're in a different area. Why should I associate me with somebody that I'm not going to see? It's a bit senseless. We can' t trust them. (Protestant male, 17)

Young people in Kelly's study had similar views: they also suggested that contacts made in cross-community initiatives were not maintained after returning home, since segregated housing areas and education systems made it very difficult (Kelly 2002, 68). It has also been noted that returning to their own areas often signifies returning to previously held beliefs and atttudes. Therefore many young people do not use the full potential of cross-community encounters when they take place (McGrellis 2005, 65).

How familiar one was with members of the other community, seemed to be reflected in their opinions about integrated education as well. The two interview participants who had had more contacts with people from the other group both thought that integrated education was a good idea, the other one had attended an integrated school himself. The pupils in integrated schools have mostly been found to be content with those experiences (e.g. McGrellis 2005). The Protestant participants with fewer experiences of Catholics had however no confidence in the communities' ability to co-exist peacefully in school, both of them thought that integrated education would simply cause problems and violence.

> Q: What do you think about integrated education?
>
> R: All that I can say is that it would be like in America: two different sides, you're going to end up with guns, knives all sorts of violence going on in the school. Would the teachers be able to cope with it? (Protestant male, 17)

This fear of violence was also visible in the attitudes of the other two when they were asked whether Catholics and Protestants should live peacefully side by side. The next excerpt is from a pair interview. The discussion between the two interview participants shows well how the fear of trouble and violence and disillusionment about the possibility to live peacefully together affects the other interview participant's attitude about segregation, even though his personal values are not fundamentally sectarian:

> Q: So you think that it's good that there are Protestant and Catholic areas?
>
> R1: That's it. They're just standing for what they believe in so you can't fault them
>
> R2: I think that there shouldn't be Catholic and Protestant, just
>
> Q: That they should be able to live together?
>
> R2: That's like, say, a Catholic walking into a Protestant area, they're going to give him a kick or say a Protestant walking into a Catholic area. That's not right. Everybody should just be, there's shouldn't be any difference made.
>
> R1: So what you are saying is that people are going to get killed and all. That people get shot and beaten for nothing. People go walking in there and people are shooting them from a car.
>
> R2: I'm not saying that. I know what you are trying to say but it shouldn't have been

Catholic and Protestant to start with.

R1: It should not have been like that years back, it should never have happened. (Catholic male, 17)

R2: Yeah. (Catholic female, 17)

The bad experiences of the past had after all planted a seed of long-lasting doubt and wariness of the other community for the earlier mentioned Catholic girl, whose friends had attacked her. Even though she said that now that she had friends from the other side she was not worried anymore, she added that she would nevertheless tell her children not to trust people from the other side because of all the negative experiences that she had had. Seemingly all the good experiences had not been enough to replace all the negative memories and distrust caused by the previous incidents. Even though all of the interview participants in this group found it to be a good thing that Protestants and Catholics would get to know each other better, none of them could not see co-existence without violent confrontations as a realistic option. Therefore, they were against too much integration in the society. For two of them already integrated education seemed to pose a threat to common security, the other two saw integrated education as a viable possibility but thought that living side by side in same areas was a step too far that would just lead to more destruction. All of the interview participants in this group thought it was better that Protestant and Catholic residental areas were kept apart in the future as well.

5.2.4.3 For segregation

Three young people who took part in this study thought that it was better to keep Northern Ireland as a segregated society and, in their opinion, contacts between Catholics and Protestants was not a positive thing. Of these interview participants two were Protestants and one was Catholic, there were two males and one female. All of them had lived their whole lives in working-class areas where sectarian violence was commonplace. Two of them had not had virtually any contacts at all with people from the other group. If there had been some, they had only been passing encounters, such as school trips, and no real familiarisation had taken place. One of the young people had had some contacts with members of the other community, but as he described it, those encounters had always taken place in a negative atmosphere.

All of the young people in this group had the opinion that it was important to know the religious background of a person. They justified their argument with the same reasons as some of the interview participants in the previous group: it is important to know whether a person is Catholic or Protestant because if he is of the opposite community, he might give you a "full scale beating" with

his friends. We did not discuss the possibility of that happening with people from the own group. Two of the intervew participants in this group, both Protestant males, told about some negative experiences that they had had with members of the other community. The other one had taken place in a school trip where there were both Catholic and Protestant pupils along. The boy told that there had been a little Catholic girl who was dirty and acted strangely. Possibly because of this, he had said that Catholics are dirty and they smell when he earlier had been asked to tell his spontanious images of Catholics. The other Protestant boy told that he had lived close to some Catholics and they had always been fighting, therefore he hated them. He also told about one experience that he had had when he had been crossing a Catholic area and had been caught. The Catholics had tried to throw him into water but he had escaped. Both of them thought that Catholics could not be trusted. One added that Catholics could not trust Protestants either.

Their mistrust in Catholics was also visible in their opinons about integrated education; these young people were sure that it would just mean trouble. The following comment was expressed in a way that leads to think that the main offenders would be the Catholics.

> Q: What do you think about integrated education?
>
> R: We'd be fighting all the time. They'd be running about with a knife in their pocket and the next thing you know it's on your back. (Protestant male, 14)

They did not have any interest in getting to know people from the other side better. In fact their opinion was just the opposite: they definitely did not want to familiarise themselves with any of them. All of them were, however, against violent confrontations and thought that people in Northern Ireland should live peacefully. In their opinion it was done most effectively by keeping Protestants and Catholics apart, either in different parts of the island or at least divided by a wall.

5.2.4.4. Negative confrontations create negative attitudes

What seemed to be especially important in the amount of contacts was the amount of negative vs. positive confrontations with members of the other community. The experiences of the interviewees who were for segregation had been solely negative in nature. Other working-class interview participants had also had negative experiences with members of the other community, but the more contacts they had, the more positive experiences there were, as well. Accordingly, none of the non-sectarian research participants told me about bad experiences with members of the other group. Of course, it is also possible that they did not consider such experiences to be worth mentioning, since the denominational group of a person was for them not the most important factor in someone and they considered people to be most of all individuals. Hence, had there been bad experiences, possibly they would have not paid much attention to the fact that this person was

Catholic/Protestant. Of course, this can only be speculated. Nevertheless, the results seem to indicate that negative experiences, or/and the lack of positive experiences with the other group enhance the development of sectarian attitudes.

5.2.5 Other influencing factors

As discussed in chapter 2, family and school are two major pedagogues. Thus, I wanted to investigate their role in the lives of these young people as well to see, how they influenced the attitudes of the young people. It is not where the primary interest of this study lies but their impact cannot be disregarded when one is examining youth. There have been no published accounts on the role of families and schools in the socializing process (Trew 2004, 509). The focus of my interest in terms of family and school lay in the way in which sectarianism and conflict-related incidents were or were not discussed at home and at school. By asking questions about this I was hoping to get an insight on the eventual passing of certain values and attitudes to the youth. My interview participants made references to family and school also in other parts of the interview, but largely the observations on family and school are based on their answers to these questions:

- Do you have a close and confidential relationship with your parents or some other adult?

- If something happens in terms of the conflict do you talk about it at home?

- How do your parents react if something happens?

- Do you learn at school about different communities living in NI?

- Do you ever discuss the conflict in classes?

In addition, attention was paid to their socio-economical background.

5.2.5.1 Family

The culture of silence at all levels of the society is a phenomenon observed by many scholars in Northern Ireland. The avoidance of political discussion has been salient for protection of personal safety. (McGrellis 2005.) The replies of my research participants seemed to confirm this for their part. When asked if they discussed the Troubles and sectarian incidents at home the unanimous answer of everyone was that you do not really talk about those things at home. Some females told that if there was trouble going on their parents were concerned about their safety and their mobility was restricted. The conflict was, however, then discussed only on a practical level. A few reserach participants mentioned that if there was something current on the news they might have a small, passing conversation about it but nothing deeper than that. Some of the interview participants also

knew about some experiences that their parents had had during the Troubles but they clarified to me that it was only a small fraction that they knew. Even a boy, who told that his family had always been active in organising things in the conflict, said that he did not know much about his family's experiences. Considering that most of them had said that they had a close and confidential relationship with their parents, it is strange that these events had never been discussed. As Smyth (1999) has investigated, the fact remains that as many as over 40 000 people were injured during the Troubles. Thus, it is very probable that some of the families of these young people had probably also suffered during the Troubles. A Protestant female told that her parents had kept all the bad things away from her when she was a child. It was only when she had gone to high school that she had understood that something was going on. These results seem to back up other researchers' findings about parents' conscious efforts to hide the painful incidents of the past from the children. The study of Hayes and Campbell (2005), for instance, revealed that many parents did not want to tell their children about these incidents in order not to pass on the legacy of hatred.

Even though the Troubles were not much discussed in most homes, the interview participants still thought that adults passed their own negative attitudes to their children. Seven research participants, more than half of them, pointed out that many people in Northern Ireland had been brought up to hate the other religion and its affiliates. They brought it up on their own initiative, there was no question in my interview structure regarding that. Young people in other studies have had similar views (Sinclair et al. 2004, Kelly 2002). It was said during the interviews that the elders made also younger people bitter. One Catholic girl thought that most people in Northern Ireland had been brought up to hate the other religion. A Protestant female describes here how she thinks that the anger and sectarian attitudes are transmitted to the next generation:

> R: …But children in our age, the Troubles aren't that bad but they're still starting up fights and things because of things that they've heard from their parents. There would be lots of people that I would know whose parents would have told them: Oh Catholics are horrible, they're just sad and all that. I had a friend whose father would have said when he was young: Oh look at him, look what he's wearing around his neck, he's Catholic. And he would say- he would just yell at him Teak or Feunian or something nasty for Catholics. It's like a lot of people in my school always hear their parents saying things like that and have started doing that themselves because their parents are angry so then they are angry. (Protestant female, 15)

"Many young people do not even know why they hate Protestants or hate Catholics, they have only been brought up in an environment where many people do not like the other side", commented a Protestant male. Three interview participants acknowledged that they had personally been raised to think in a certain manner about the other group. Two of them seemed to have contradictory thoughts and feelings about it. Even though they did not like the fact that the bitterness of their parents had been passed on to them, they planned to do the same to their own children.

R1: But I hate the way we are because of our elders. They make us bitter.

R2:They make us bitter.

R1: I've always been told: don't trust a Protestant as far as you can [unclear] not that very far. So I hate that we've all been told so and then it goes carried on. So I've been told not to trust Protestants so I'll tell my kids not to trust Protestants and it'll go on and on and on and on. So I [unclear] family the way we are now. Do you think that's true?

R2: You do take it all.

R1: You do take it all.

Q: And if you have kids, what will you say?

R1: I'll probably tell them as well not to trust Protestants (Catholic female, 17)

R2: I'll tell them the same like. Because I've been beaten up by Protestants which I thought were my friends. I've got my mummy took off me by Protestants so I couldn't get home and beat up. I wouldn't trust them. (Catholic female, 18)

On the other hand, the socialisation into certain values seemed to work the other way around, as well. A 16-year-old Protestant male told that his mother was very much against all sectarianism. Consequently, he was also completely against segregation and wanted to make no difference between Protestants and Catholics.

5.2.5.2 Socio-economical background

It can be questioned, whether the socio-economical background of the interviewee played a part in the formation of sectarian/non-sectarian attitudes. Sectarianism has mostly been seen as a working-class phenomenon in Northern Ireland. This was the case among my interview participants, as well, since none of the four interviewees who came from middle-class families had sectarian attitudes. All of the interviewees who were for segregation had a working-class background. However, not all of the research participants who came from a working-class background were biased. Some of them were, on the contrary, anti-sectarian. There were feelings of marginalisation among interviewees from families of low socio-economical status, and the other community was seen as more advantaged by some of them. However, even these feelings of inequality did not straightforwardly lead to sectarian attitudes. Half of the young people who felt that their own group was marginalised either socially or economically, were not biased but belonged to the group It depends. Interviewees from the other half, however, were for segregation. It is possible that the feelings of marginalisation play some part in the development of sectarian attitudes. Common to those interview participants that come from a working-class family but are anti-sectarian, is that they have lived in peaceful areas and have not had conflict-related experiences. Therefore, I infer that more than the socio-economical background as such, the residential area and the level of violence and sectarian confrontations there influenced the attitudes of young people.

5.2.5.3 School

The culture of silence seemed to be present at school, as well. All of the interview participants said that the Troubles had never been discussed in classes. A Catholic male explained to me that if a teacher would bring the subject up in the classroom he would be fired at once because teachers could not take any sides. Among my research participants only two had discussed the different communities living in Nortern Ireland at school. One of them was a 13-year-old Catholic female who went to a Catholic school and the other was a 17-year-old Catholic male who had been in an integrated school. He had nevertheless been disappointed because Irish history or history of Northern Ireland was not in the syllabus in mixed schools. Neither was Irish language, he added, all of them were taught only in Catholic schools. A Protestant male told me the same thing, their history lessons were more concentrated on the history of England. History of Ireland had only briefly been touched.

In addition to these, also e.g. public opinion and the media influence young people's attitudes (see Keenan 2002). In this study I, however, did not find it necessary to examine their influence in more detail, since it was not the main focus.

5.3 The Troubles and conflict-related experiences

Since the focus of my study was to find out if living in the midst of a political conflict politicises young people in a different way than living in a peaceful society, it was important to know what kinds of experiences the research participants personally had had of the conflict. I also wanted to know about the experiences of their family and friends because in addition to the personal experiences of my interviewees, also second-hand experiences shaped their understanding of the conflict and their attitudes towards the other community and sectarianism. Furthermore, I asked them a wide range of background questions in order to find, how they perceived the conflict in general and reasons, motives and impacts connected to it.

5.3.1 Images of the Troubles

When I asked the young people to describe their spontanious images when they heard the word Troubles there were many different replies. Most of the images were negative and had to do with violence, death and destruction. They contained things like petrol bombs, stone throwing, shootings, paramilitaries and arguing. There were, however, also a few answers with positive connotations to the Troubles. In these answers the Troubles were seen as a struggle to achieve something better, something worth fighting for. For those young people the Troubles signified fighting for your

rights, for your country, for your own area and, ultimately, fighting for your home. Some of these young people lived in interface-areas, and for them the conflict was something very concrete and real. Unlike many other research participants, they had to take it into consideration in their own lives every day. However, also some interviewees from peaceful areas made the same remark.

There were different opinions on the grounds and reasons why the conflict had started in the first place. These varied from abstract moral reasoning to concrete goals that people wanted to achieve. The most abstract explanation was given by the youngest research participant, a 13-year-old Catholic girl. She said that the basic reason for the Troubles was people's inability to take into consideration other people's views and opinions. On the other hand, she was not very well aware of the details of the conflict so she could not give any political or historical explanations to it like most of the young people did. McEvoy-Levy had noted that young people in areas with a low level of violence tended to distance the conflict and the peace process (McEvoy-Levy 2001, 94). The interview participants saw the Troubles mostly as a result of different political pursuits. Most young people thought that the basic reason was England's attempt to take over Ireland, and the fraction that had so been caused between the two communities. Some of the research participants concentrated more on the events of the recent decades. In their opinion the root of the conflict was the Catholic interest to gain freedom from Great Britain, that did not want to give it to them. Here a Protestant male explains how crossing interests of different parties create an endless cycle of fighting:

> Q: If I say to you the world Troubles, what do you think of?
>
> R: It just means to me all the fighting in the past that has been around, really.
>
> Q: What's the reason for that?
>
> R: Both sides believe that the land is ours, they have a right to it. And both of them won't give up because no-one's gonna back down and if anyone isn't backing down they're gonna fight. That's what it means to me, 'cause say, you can't sit down and talk 'cause no-one is gonna turn around and say that you can keep it at the end of the day. You are gonna have to fight for it. (Protestant male, 15)

Even though the opinions on the roots of the conflict were quite convergent, there was more variation in the opinions on who was responsible for it. According to a 16-year-old Catholic male the politicians were the primary instigators for the conflict. In his opinion they had only been making people angry and putting them down, talking but not doing anything concrete. For this reason the conflict had aggravated, he thought. Some of the interview participants held the paramilitaries responsible for the Troubles. A Protestant girl thought that the people who were responsible for the conflict were such people who had other problems in their lives and who were angry. In her opinion these kinds of argumentative people would be violent in any case. According

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to a Catholic 18-year-old girl normal Caholics and Protestants were responsible for the Troubles, the key was their negative attitude towards each other:

> R: ...they just don't like each other and that's it. They just don't like each other and they think that we're all different people like we're all robots and they're the people and we're robots. (Catholic female, 18)

When I asked about the impacts of the Troubles only three persons were able to find something good that had resulted from it. Two interview participants said that if they had to find something positive in the Troubles it would be people standing up for what they believed in. From a Protestant male's point of view a positive thing was that people who had offended you were getting punished for it.

> R: The good side of the troubles is -just say that Catholics start at us. The good side is that we're getting back at them. That you're getting back at them and you're sure that you're not going to sit down and let them walk away. (Protestant male, 15)

As we will later discuss, punishing criminals has not been a given thing in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. Thus, many people might still feel that the only way to maintain their rights is to take the law into their own hands. Some of the young people also thought that it was good that there were the Troubles because it gave them something to do and something to talk about. They said that they would be bored if there were no Troubles anymore because there was nothing to do for young people.

> R1: See if there would be more places for young people like us here, there would be no young people on the streets and there wouldn't be no problems with them trying to start riots and causing problems. So we need more centers to take people out of the street. Give them something to look forward to instead of being on the hood.
>
> R2: It's the people's fault really, not to have parks for football practising and all that. At the [unclear] they don't bother with it.
>
> R1: We are still getting the funds and the money to do it, so where is all that money? (Protestant male, 15)
>
> R2: Where is it? (Protestant male, 14)

Nonetheless, all the interview participants were again unanimous in one thing: all agreed that most things brought by the Troubles had only been negative. They said that the Troubles were really destructive and that it was stupid to be wrecking your own country and ruining your own property. Lots of efforts had been made and a great deal of money and time had been spent in it without managing to put an end to it. As a result there were separate areas to Catholics and Protestants and less people to talk to. People had been brought up to hate the other religion, the Troubles created

fear and bitterness among people. They were afraid to walk in the dark or wearing a [school] uniform. Houses were burnt down, cars were stolen and there were bombs and shootings in Northern Ireland. There was criminal damage caused everywhere. People were beaten and there were fights in football matches. There were riots and people got arrested. Police was coming into people's houses. These were some of the things that the young people described; their list of impacts of the Troubles was long. Many interview participants mentioned that there was no sense in the Troubles, all it was was killing people over nothing. Some of them added that often it was innocent people who suffered.

5.3.2 Experiences

Nine interview participants expressed to me that they had some experiences connected to the conflict. However, it seemed to me that individual young people comprehended this question in various ways. Some of them appeared to conceive conflict-related experiences only as violence, whereas others mentioned e.g. having been asked for their denominational group or having been called names because of it. Additionally, when I asked one boy about his experiences of the Troubles he described me in detail an incident during which he and his friend had nearly been stabbed. When I asked further questions it turned out that the incident had not had any sectarian motives. He admitted that only because it included violence, he had connected the incident to the Troubles. Hence, the Troubles and violence seemed to be equivalents to him. Further eight persons told that people that they knew, members of the family or friends had been involved in something that was connected to the conflict. Three research participants answered that neither they nor anyone they knew had been subject to any incident during the conflict. It was the Protestant research participants that had more experiences, five Protestants had personal experiences and five told that they knew about other people's experiences. The equivalent numbers among Catholics were three and three. Two Catholics and one Protestant told me that the conflict had not touched their lives in any way.

The conflict-related incidents of my interview participants had occurred when they had been confronted with one or several opposing groups: members of the other community, police or paramilitaries. There were also some statements about trouble with members of the own community.

5.3.2.1 Confronted with the other side

Most of the incidents happened with members of the other community. Socialising with the other side is not approved by many in the highly denominational communities, especially if the area is

dominated by paramilitaries. One female participant had been forced to break up with her boyfriend, who belonged to the other community, because his friends did not approve of the relationship. According to her, they would have beaten her otherwise. "It was the best thing to do", she stated. Many young people mentioned that they had to avoid walking in certain areas, walking in the dark or wearing school uniforms because they were afraid of running into members of the other community. To be recognised as a member of the opposing group in the other group's area would mean big trouble. If one had to walk through such an area, explained a Protestant male, not a word could be said, in order not to be recognised. Employing these avoidance strategies have been found to be very commonplace in many youth studies in Northern Ireland (e.g. McGrellis 2005). One interview participant had been caught in another neighbourhood and had almost been thrown into water by the residents of that area. One research participant had to walk through such an area for some time. In addition to beatings with a stick she had been subjected to insults, threats, spits and kickings, they had even thrown urine at her. This had shocked her deeply. Two persons told that they had been beaten by members of the other community. Several interview participants also mentioned that their family members or other people that they knew had suffered from violent attacks by members of the other group.

One boy told that people from the other side had put him out of his own home. He had lived next to the border of two different communities and he mentioned in another context that there had been petrol bombs thrown into their garden. Even though people were afraid to confront the other group, explained a Catholic girl, they still wanted to show that they had not surrendered. "People used to bang their pots and all that to let the Protestants know that we're still armed and we're going to fight", she said. Especially the marching season was seen as a troublesome time by many interview participants. This is how the Catholic girl mentioned above described it:

> R: …Especially at 12th of July, 12th of July is really bad over here. You can't leave your house. Because it's a time when the Protestants all march up the Catholic road and all the Catholics go nuts and throw stones and petrol bombs at them and you just can't leave your house. You can't let your children out because your child can get beaten up. Protestants drive around and try to kill you and all that. So you just don't like them- I don't like messing on the streets it's really bad. I hate it all. (Catholic female, 18)

Other interview participants had also seen rioting and shootings during the marching season. One research participant told that a part of her family had been killed in a riot. When there was rioting, the army or the police were often involved in the situation.

5.3.2.2 Police

Some of my research participants had not only seen rioting; their experiences were from the rioter's point of view. All the young people who told about having participated in rioting were male. A

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Protestant female explained that she often heard stories about the riots at school and that it was always teenage boys who were bragging about their actions in the riots. Four interview participants told that the last riot had started from a quarrel about the rights to use a road, and that they had all taken part in it. They explained that the rioting had included pipe bombs and shooting at the police (they did not mention what kinds of weapons they had used). The result was that the police had started to shoot at them with water canoons. One of the boys commented that the police had used unnecessary force and beat and arrested people that had just been walking by.

There were negative experiences related to the police also outside rioting. A Protestant male was bitter at the police because they had hurt his mother:

> Q: What kind of experiences have you had?
>
> R: Loads. And my mom, she was walking down the field, we were having fun there, and the Peters [the police], one of them just went down there and cracked her down to the back of her leg with a baton. And then they sit and call you a wanker and all that.
>
> Q: You're saying a policeman hit your mom in the leg?
>
> R: Ay. For nothing. She didn't do anything. We were having our fun there and the Teaks [Catholics] come and spoil it and start doing [unclear] We're even not allowed to play football in our own field. And she tried to stop it and the Peters started to crush her leg with a baton. (Protestant male, 14)

Altogether, most comments regarding the police were negative. Similar view of hostility and distrust towards the police have been found among young people in other studies as well. (McGrellis 2005, Smyth 1998). A common idea was that many policemen, especially the elder, were biased and in favour of the Protestants. A Catholic research participant describes here what she used to see during the marching season:

> Q: When I say the word Troubles, what do you think of?
>
> R: I used to walk to marching and I see, you know the police, they were always just shooting Catholics but leaving the Protestants alone. And then we always got beaten, we always got arrested for it. (Catholic female. 18)

That the police was biased was, however, not only a Catholic point of view, it was the opinion of many Protestant interview participants as well. A Protestant female explained:

> Q: And what do you think about the security forces and police?
>
> R: I think that they do quite a good job but I think that there's a lot of policemen who would be quite sectarian and I'd say that there would be policemen who would be more leaning towards one side. Say, they saw a Protestant [unclear] towards a Catholic but they wouldn't tell him off. But if they saw a Catholic doing it they make sure that he goes to prison or whatever for shooting people or things like that. I think that the police force has to be more fair about it and to make sure that in all areas people are put in prison and

that things are antisectarian. I think it needs to be tougher, they need to be tougher about it and they need to make sure that people aren't allowed to do it. (Protestant female, 15)

Among the many young people who thought that the police did not or could not protect them there were, however also many Protestants. There were also a few comments of the police using unnecessary force. Some interview participants thought that the police was somehow involved in drug sales. One of them commented that the police provoked it. He did not explain more clearly what he meant by this comment. Other one thought that if the police detected any drugs, they would keep them.

Only two persons had the opinion that the police did a good job. One of them added that even though they had a hard job they probably did their best all the time. It is noteworthy that the speaker was a Catholic, since the relationship between Catholics and the police in Northern Ireland has traditionally been considered as tumultuous. The respondent was, however, one of the youngest interview participants. This might indicate a change in the tendency. This change is also supported by the fact that there were actually just as many Protestants who complained about the police as there were Catholics. There was a difference to be found between the genders: both two positive notions were given by females. The male respondents outnumbered the female ones and all of them had negative images of the police. Only males had been personally involved with the police.

5.3.2.3 Paramilitaries

Due to a lack of trust in the police forces' ability to guarantee security in all areas of Northern Ireland, the paramilitaries from both sides have been one of the most influential parties in the building and maintaining of the conflict. In many areas they have acted as the local security forces controlling not only outsiders' activities in the area but also the activities of the area's residents. Their influence had been notable also in the lives of many young people who took part in this study. Many of their Troubles-related experiences had to do with local paramilitaries.

Some interview participants told that members of their families were or had been involved in the paramilitaries. A Catholic girl told that because of the paramilitary activities of a family member - apparently against members of the same community- she and her siblings had become a target of abuse. Some members of their own community had called them names and beaten them. She had also been afraid of loosing an important relationship because of this. In the end it turned out, however, that the member of her family had not been the one responsible for the actions, therefore the relationship had not been cut off. Several interview participants brought up that members of their own families or friends' family members had been subjects to paramilitary violence. They did

not, however, explain in greater detail in what kinds of circumstances the events had taken place or whether the paramilitaries had been of the own or of the opposing community.

What especially concerned young people in terms of paramilitary activity were the so-called punishment beatings. This is how two Catholic interview participants explain the punishment beatings:

> R1: The Irps [INLA] beat us, the IRA beat us, they hit us, they shoot us and all that if we're doing bad things, you know drinking -and what else? Joyriding. Do you know what is joyriding?
>
> Q: Yeah.
>
> R2: Drug dealing.
>
> R1: Drug dealing.
>
> R2: What else? (Catholic female, 17)
>
> R1: If we messed about with Protestants. If we hang about with Protestants we would get beaten up. That's the way the INLA works. (Catholic female, 18)

One interview participant had personally been subjected to punishment beatings and others knew young people with similar experiencies. Having still been underaged, a Catholic male had been punished heavily by the paramilitaries for something that he had done against them.

> R: …They thought it was a crime against their organisation and they decided to take me away for a couple of days and torture me. They beat me, put cigarette ends at my body, gave me electric shock treatment, stuck my body in cold water for a couple of days. I was also beaten a few times, told to leave my country, told to leave my family. (Catholic male, between 20-25)

He did not leave the country, however, which resulted in further beatings and torture during the following years. The harsh treatment that this interview particpant describes was at the time a common paramilitary way to punish dissidents. A Catholic female told me about her two friends who both had died as a result of punishment beatings. The other one had killed himself for having been sick of the torturing, beatings and the pressuring done by the paramilitaries. Another friend had died during a punishment operation. It was, however, unclear whether it had happened accidentally or whether he had killed himself. Another Catholic interview participant told that punishment beatings were done to nearly all of her friends. She also explained that the punishment system was sometimes unfair, and relatives of paramilitaries were not punished.

Even though their friends had suffered so greatly from the treatment of the paramilitaries, the two latter interview participants had positive notions of the paramilitaries. One of them noted that all the paramilitary groups were different and all she knew was that they were trying to fight for their

country. The other girl added that "you believe in your own". In addition, some other interview participants talked positively about the paramilitaries. All of them lived in areas with paramilitary presence. Young people from both communities thought that the paramilitaries protected them and they "tried to keep the street a happy place". Two Protestant boys were sure that if there were no paramilitaries they would be tortured and people from their community would get killed. They added that some people deserved to get beaten. One Protestant male reminded that the paramilitaries all looked after each other.

There were, however, more negative comments about the paramilitaries than positive ones. Five research participants talked positively about the paramilitaries, whereas seven were against them. The attitudes of Catholic research participants seemed to be more negative towards paramlitaries. Two thirds of them were against paramilitaries, whereas the Protestants were divided in half. The paramilitaries were said to be bad, sad people that you needed to stay away from. They were criticised for hurting members of their own community and hurting innocent people instead of bad people. A Protestant female also noted that their activities never solved anything, it was only an endless cycle of violence. Many knew that the paramiltaries were involved in drugs and some Protestant males commented that it was not even about politics anymore, all they wanted was money. A Catholic male described the competition that the paramilitaries had with the "Hoods", criminal youth gangs, because of money.

> R: ..the IRA has caused more damage in this country than anybody else. So they speak of them [young criminal gangs] as the Hoods. All they do is they take what they need, I suppose, because everything they've had the IRA has blown it up, smashed or wrecked so they take what they need and that's it. They need to live too. The IRA has taken all our money and from the youth clubs they've taken all our money. For corruption or what is it called, protection money. Protection money, they say. Give us money and we protect your premises. But it's been that way and as we know, the IRA takes protection money off them and then the Hoods go in and crack their place and they beat them at their own game. So they're saying that they'll protect this place but when the Hoods wreck it it's not protected no more because they've done it. (Catholic male, between 20-25)

This research participant sees the IRA as a source of destruction that pretends to be protecting people. Many others saw the paramilitaries, especially the Catholic ones, as duplicitous groups as well. According to a 17-year-old Protestant male the paramilitaries got away with many things they did because of their political connections.

5.4 Interest in politics and participation in society

The main focus of this study was to see if the young people were interested in participation in societal issues themselves, especially in terms of the conflict. The current problems of the Northern

Ireland conflict were examined and I considered participation to be either via political institutions or by some other means, such as voluntary organisations.

5.4.1 Meanings attached to nationality

The research participants were asked what nationality and their country meant to them. Half of the intervewees (n=6) who answered this question thought that nationality was not important to them. Two of them were Catholics and four were Protestants. Three of them even said that nationality did not mean anything in general. According to a 17-year-old Protestant male, "Nationality is worn out, nobody bothers with it." He commented this way because there was "no war anymore, nobody cared about nationalism anymore". Instead, other things were more important, such as looking after the interests of the people in your community, organising better jobs and getting more money for your country. Other interview participants looked at the question from an interpersonal point of view. They highlighted that it was not important, where a person came from. "If there was someone from a different country it woulnd´t make me feel any different against them", said a 16-year-old Protestant male. Apparently, to these interviewees, there were no contradictions nor big feelings connected to nationality, it seemed to be a neutral, given thing to them.

The other half of the interview participants, however, had different views about it. To many of them nationality meant "everything in the world", quoting the words of a Catholic male. Most of them expressed that they were proud of their nationality. There were an equal amount of Catholics and Protestants in this group. Not all of them mentioned, what nationality and country they identified with. Both of the Catholics who referred to a certain nationality said that they were Irish. Surprisingly, also one of the Protestants revealed to be "proud to be Irish". The remaining two Protestants announced to be British. The other one added that she was also proud to be from Northern Ireland.

5.4.2 Views on parliamentary politics

Most of the young people said that they were not really interested in politics (9 out of n=13). The reasons that they gave for that were akin to the findings from other studies. They were disappointed in the politicians and many thought that the politicians did not really do anything, they only talked and talked but did not make anything happen. They were failing their people and were not living up to the promises they made.

> Q: How do you feel about politicians?
>
> R: Most of them I would say would be liars. I just don't believe in most of them. They

influence people in their own sad ways. You know, they really think that the Unionism- or, they're really determined to British, no matter what. And the Nationalists are the other way around, they have everything against and they say that the Unionists are backwards and stuff like that. I don't really trust them or believe in them really. (Protestant male, 17)

According to many, politicians often caused new arguments between people.

R: I don't really associate myself with any politicians and I think that they have a hard job but I think that they talk a bit of rubbish sometimes in the tv and that just insults people sometimes which makes them maybe wanna go out and riot or cause violence. (Catholic male, 16)

Many research participants were upset with the constant arguing that went on in the Northern Ireland politics. A 15-year-old Protestant commented:

I don't like politics in NI because everybody seems to argue about it a lot and that's actually probably one of the reasons why I don't want to live here when I'm older. Because it does seem to be getting to a quite a bit of a problem and I know that it used to be a big problem so I don't know. (Protestant female, 15)

Most of the research participants said that they did not understand politics. According to one point of view it was better to stay out of things that were not familiar to you:

R: The only thing that I know about it is that they're just people in parliament. There's stuff you don't care about and there's stuff that you do care about. If you´re not in it you shouldn´t really be bothered about it. You shouldn't really put your nose into something like this if you don't know about it. (Protestant male, 17)

Those who were interested in politics followed it through the news from the Internet, TV and newspapers to be aware of what was going on in the country. None of them supported any political party. "I would just go with the group that had the best policies at the time", told a 17-year-old male.

There were clear gender differences to be found in the interest in politics among my research participants. Amid those who expressed some interest in politics, there were no females. All the female participants told that they were not interested in politics. That was contrary to the results of Whyte, in her sample girls placed slightly more importance to politics than boys did (Whyte 1998, 616). There was also a difference to be found between Protestants and Catholics. Of the four participants who stated to be interested in politics only one was Catholic and the remaining three were Protestants. The study of Jean Whyte (1998) revealed that Protestant young people had stronger confidence in the system of governance in Northern Ireland and they also identified themselves more strongly with it than their Catholic counterparts. This disinterest of the Catholic young people might be explained with the fact that at the time the decisions concerning Northern Ireland were made in London because the Northern Ireland assembly was suspended. Therefore the

Catholics possibly felt left out of the decision making. When I asked whether the Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland had an effect on the life in Northern Ireland only three interview participants thought that the ROI had some impact, whereas all of them had the notion of Great Britain affecting the life in Northern Ireland.

5.4.3 Interest in participation

The common disinterest in parliamentary politics did not equal disinterest in societal participation, however. Only two research participants considered that young people should not participate in societal issues, the others were very much in favour of it. Not many had been active in terms of societal issues so far but there was one girl with NGO-experience and some boys that had been "fighting the cause" alongside with paramilitaries.

Why did two research participants consider that young people's participation in common issues was not a good idea? A Protestant male had the opinion that young people were not capable of making independent decisions yet but were still influenced by their parents. Due to their lack of ability he did not find young people to have any role in politics. He, however thought that they should be aware of it and that they sould be taught to make their own decisions. The other interview participant who was against young people's participation based her conception on her own experiences. She told that she personally had had to suffer because a family member of hers had been in the paramilitaries. She thought that it was not right that the families of the young actives would be put at risk.

The majority of the research participants considered that young people should take a stance and participate in common issues. They were the new generation that could change things with new, fresh ideas. Many of them thought that the previous generations were too bitter to be able leave their disagreements and disputes aside. "It's not gonna go unless we kids take part", said a 17-year-old Catholic girl. Thus young people were the onces who would have to stand up and make a change, stop the violence. They should join political parties like DUP and Sinn Fein. A Catholic male noted that young people had already made a difference:

> R: They were the ones who got the peace in the first place in the politics. If it wasn't for them being all peaceful people would still be getting shot every day. … if there wasn't for young politicians we wouldn't have our peace. (Catholic male, 17)

Even though generally supportive of the idea and enthusiastic about it, not everyone was however prepared to commit themselves. The reasons were several. Politics was seen as too demanding, according to a Catholic male there was too much pressure there for him. Another Catholic male

agreed that he would otherwise take part in it himself but in his opinion he did not "have the brains" to do it. Even though it would not be a bad idea, a 16-year-old Protestant thought that many young people were too busy doing other things and having a laugh to be bothered about common issues. He added that political participation was simply not something that he would personally find interesting but he would vote once he was older. For some it was unclear what young people actually could do. A 13-year-old Catholic female announced that she did not want to participate herself because in her opinion the political parties did not do anything at all.

Politics is not an easily comprehensible subject to adults either and young people are only starting to learn the basics of how the structures of the society function. Seemingly, it was not entirely clear to these young people yet what politics means. It did not occur to them that structures and institutions could also be changed. A Protestant girl started her answer similarly to the Catholic girl mentioned above, she stated that she probably will never take part in politics because she is not on either side but is against all fighting. When I asked her what she would do if there was a party for people who did not want to fight anymore she responded that in that case she would definitely be in that party. She was the only one of my research participants who took part in NGO-activities. It was an anti-sectarian organisation supported by Christian soceties that worked for bringing Catholic and Protestant youth together. She told that the organisation had been succesful so far.

The other research participants who had taken initiative in terms of societal issues were all boys. They had been "fighting the cause" and helping paramilitaries by rioting. Concidering the age of these boys it is possible that their actions do not have any political motives underneath, but they are only a way of testing their limits and finding some excitement, typically to adolescent boys. After all, one of them did mention that Troubles gave them something to do, apparently activities connected to it were like a pastime for them. As McEvoy-Levy (2001, 93) has noted, sectarian encounters in small groups deal with issues that are important in adolescent lives, such as local pride, bodily integrity, self-consciousness and the tension between feelings of powerfulness and powerlessness. Joining sectarian groups might have seemed like an attractive solution, since the integration of young people into the local way of life had traditionally been very effective in Northern and Southern Ireland. Therefore, no distinctive youth subcultures have existed, contrary to other countries, such as England, where youth subcultures have been a form of expressing communal and ethnic identities (Bell 1987.) On the other hand, even though none of them said to be interested in politics, all of them could easily give a clear definition of what belonging to a political group meant. Other interview participants had answered that it meant nothing to them but these boys' answers were not as empty, it seemed to be a subject that was familiar to them. In their opinion belonging to a political group signified helping your own people out, protecting your own

community and your family and fighting for your country and defending it. Based on this and on their interviews in general my conclusion is that probably a part of it was also adolescents' yearning for excitement but these boys also already had some political ideas and opinions on the issues that concerned their own communities. After all they did see it as "fighting for your rights" and "fighting the cause". It is known that many loyalist paramilitaries are closely connected to political parties (McEvoy-Levy 2001, 94). Rioting next to the paramilitaries probably signified to them a way of expressing their views and taking a stance on them.

I wanted to know how common in the eyes of my interviewees it was for under aged people to take part in political violence. All the thirteen interview participants who answered this question believed that there were lots of young people in Northern Ireland who participated in political violence. Eleven interview participants believed that the paramilitaries recruited under age members. Nobody denied it. Their descriptions of the process of how young people get involved in political violence were very similar, both Catholics and Protestants seemed to follow a similar path. I was told that the participation in political violence started normally at the age of 10-13 when there was stone throwing, name calling and running from the police. A Catholic interview participant added that "everybody goes up about it". The group pressure seemed to be an influential factor: a Protestant female commented that she knew many people who were not particularly sectarian but who got involved in it just because their friends were involved. Two Protestant interview participants said that also a lot of the bragging about sectarian activities was just talk. However, according to a Protestant male it often happened that younger people, 13-14-year-olds, were introduced to older people, 18-19-year-olds who had paramilitary connections. The older ones then used the younger people to do their "dirty work" and thus the younger ones got into trouble. By the time they were 17-18 years old, a Protestant female said, many people realised how stupid all of it was and stopped doing it. Nevertheless, the people that did continue with it, tended to get more violent and end up using guns and things like that. Both Protestant and Catholic research participants said that often young people who had family members in the paramilitaries joined them also. Sometimes they were made to join because of family relations. I was told that you could also be forced to join if you had done something wrong in the eyes of the paramilitaries and you wanted to avoid punishment beatings. The research participants unanimously thought that the recruitment into paramilitaries started normally from the age of 16. One interview participant knew someone that had already been involved at the age of 15. "Once you sign up you can never get out, you're always in it really", remarked a 17-year-old Protestant male.

5.4.4 Possible sources of motivation

Young people can be motivated or demotivated to participate in society by different factors. I examined the relationship that the importance of nationality, political culture in the family, possible feelings of unequality in the Northern Ireland society and experiences of the conflict had with the attitudes towards participation in society.

5.4.4.1 Importance of nationality

It was interesting to see, how much the emphasised feelings of nationality affected the will to participate in societal issues. In the study of Whyte (1998), it was found that those research participants who had strong feeling about their nationality, especially about Irish nationality, were more likely to give higher ratings to the importance of politics. Therefore, also my hypothesis was that those young people who found their country and nationality personally important would be more interested in managing common issues. This was, however, not the case with my interview participants. Of the five interview participants who were willing to take part in the management of common issues only one had expressed that nationality had personal value to her. Additionally, only half of those research participants who were generally in favour of young people's participation in society had put importance on nationality. The majority of those interviewees who were in favour of young people's participation in society did not place specific importance on their country and their nationality. Subsequently, two interviewees, despite valuing their country and their nationality, did not find young people's participation in the society essential. In summary, the result was that finding nationality important was not connected to interest in participation in society amidst my research participants.

5.4.4.2 Political culture in the family

According to Sheena McGrellis (2005), family background often influences also the shaping of political views and aspirations. In her study young participants told about having learnt their political beliefs from their families and having acted according to them. The participants in her study were, however, also more aware of their families' grievances during the Troubles than my interviewees were. The family relationship was possibly more open to dialogue in these matters. It was also my intension to examine the relationship between political behaviour in the family and young people's attitudes. There was only one interview participant who mentioned that a family member of his was in politics. He did not demonstrate stronger interest in politics than the interview participants in general, but his opinions were more politicised in the sense that he saw the political party of this family member as a defender of his community. His view of politics was clearly the

most positive of all among the interviewees. The rest of the research participants did not personally know anyone who was involved in politics and they did not mention knowing about the political beliefs of their parents. They did not mention any political parties, either.

5.4.4.3 Feelings of unequality

Five interview participants, one Catholic and four Protestants, commented that the standard of living was not equal for all the people in Belfast. They felt that the other group had better possibilities economically and socially, i.a. regarding housing. When I examined their opinions on participation I noticed that one Catholic and one Protestant interviewee were not interested in participation despite their feelings of marginalisation and disadvantage. On the other hand, of the five research participants who were interested in participation, most recognised that there were elements of unequality in the Northern Ireland society. One person did not answer the questions about the similarity/difference of the Protestant and Catholic lifestyles, therefore I do not know what was her opinion. One of them did not feel personally marginalised but she made a remark to unequality in the Northern Ireland society: in her opinion many Catholics were being discriminated because of their denominational group and could not live peacefuly in some areas. The three remaining persons in this group felt all felt that they were personally being deprived of equal opportunities in the society. In their opinion the opposing community was allowed better living conditions and they had more power in the Northern Ireland society. All of them had participated in sectarian violence helping the paramilitaries.

5.4.4.4 Experiences of the conflict

Another factor that I wanted to examine in relation to the willingness to participate in common issues were the experiences of the conflict that the young person had had. Possibly negative experiences would motivate them to make it their concern to change unsatisfying things and circumstances. This was the case in Jean Whyte's study (1998), where young people who felt that the system was unfair were more motivated to take part in politics than those, who did not think in that way. On the other hand, negative experiences could also cause frustration and distrust in society and in its ability to change.

I discovered that all the five research participants who had demonstrated willingness to be personally involved in societal issues had personal experiences of the conflict. All of them, except for one, were also aware of other incidents that had happened to people that they knew. Additionally, of the altogether eight interview participants who had gone through conflict-related experiences, all but one were in favour of young people's involvement in common issues. The other

one of the two research participants who did not find it important or good that young people participated in societal issues, was consequently one of those interviewees who had neither personal experience nor did he knew about other people's experiences of the Troubles. Besides the exception of one person, the results pointed to the direction that negative experiences of the Troubles motivated the young people to act on common issues. Whether they wanted to see a change in the society or to maintain the current situation will be discussed in the following section.

5.5 The future in Northern Ireland

5.5.1 Solutions to the conflict

There were different suggestions made about the possible solutions for ending the conflict. Some of them were fairly vague and more like principals, others were very concrete actions. The solutions could be divided into forms of preference: there were solutions that aimed at integration and building a peaceful future together and then there were solutions that preferred segregation and separation as the best means of achieving peace in Northern Ireland. The majority of the research participants, nine altogether, took a position for increased integration. Not all of them were in favour of integration in all fields of the society, some thought that it was too soon for that. Nevertheless, they all thought that if Protestants and Catholics got to know each other better it would be a way forward. Some interview participants, on the other hand, had the opinion that the two communities would not be able to live side by side in peaceful coexistence, hence a permanent separation would be the most efficient solution. Whether for or against segregation, a mutual wish of everyone was that the hostilities would be ended and a peace could be reached.

Many research participants though that the eventual peace was in the hands of politicians. Northern Ireland politics would need to be changed. The wish of many was that Catholics and Protestants would work together in the government. A Catholic 16-year-old male pointed out that politicians would have to be an example for the citizens. If they were not able to get along with each other, how could they expect the regular people to do that? Some young people also expressed the wish that people should come together to work things out, but in this context there was no mention of politics. Hence, it remained unclear how this objective could be achieved. There were also different views on how politics could be used to achieve peace. There was a Catholic 17-year-old male who declared that a united Ireland was the only way to reach a peace. He was, however, quite skeptic of it, in his opinion Ireland was never going to calm down, and the Troubles were "what Ireland is all about". Several young people saw the "political groups", the paramilitaries in other words, as the

prime agents of the conflict. These interview participants thought that by putting an end to their operation the Troubles would cease. In addition, also better policing was desired.

According to quite a few interview participants things could only get better by making demografic or correspondingly territorial changes. There were some who could not understand why the people who were very passionate about being Irish or being British did not move to their respective countries, to the Republic of Ireland or to the Great Britain. Left in Northern Ireland would be only peaceful-minded people who would not need to fight. Making all areas mixed with Catholics and Protestants was the best solution for a Protestant male. Exactly contrary views were presented as well, in the opinion of three Protestant males only a powerful way of dividing Protestant and Catholic areas would make life in Northern Ireland more peaceful. They were probably thinking mostly about Belfast when they suggested that a big obstacle should be built between Protestant and Catholic neighbourhoods. After that life would be more enjoyable, said one of them. Similarly to the results of McEvoy (2000, 103), the young men who were the least prepared to work in peacebuilding were the ones with the least educational and employment prospects and the most experiences of violence.

5.5.2 Visions of the future

The current situation in Northern Ireland was evaluated in various ways by the young people. One person thought that the cease-fires had not made any difference. Three interview participants believed that the situation had got slightly better in Northern Ireland after the beginnig of the peace process. Two persons, on the other hand, mentioned that the Troubles were over and there was no war anymore. I asked the young people what they thought about the future. Most of them had hopes of a better future but there were also pessimists among them who believed that nothing was going to change, or the situation could even take a turn for the worse.

Two Catholic girls thought that the Troubles were going to escalate because, in time people tend to get more and more bitter. Ireland will never calm down, said also a Catholic male. He could not even imagine a situation without the Troubles:

> Q: What would life here be like without the Troubles, what would be different?
>
> R: It wouldn't be the same without the Troubles, you know what I mean. That's what Ireland's all about.
>
> Q: Can you imagine a situation like that?
>
> R: No. It would never happen. It will never happen. Never. No way. Do you know what all the Brits want? Scumbags, they want it all, Ireland. They don't want a wee corner, they want it all. See, if they don't get it all it will never stop, and they will never get it all. It will

never change around here. Never. (Catholic male, 17)

Many hoped that things would change in the future but they were not very confident of it. A 16-year-old Catholic male, for example said that even though he thought that things would get better eventually, he did not believe that it would happen in the next 20-30 years. A Protestant 16-year-old male was hopeful and believed that religious tolerance would increase in Northern Ireland and there would be less violence. However, he added that he could not picture everyone in Northern Ireland living in one, mixed community yet.

There were also brighter visions of the future. Even though this Protestant girl was planning to move abroad in the future she was able to imagine what a better future in Northern Ireland could be like:

> Q: What do you think that the future here will be like?
>
> R: I hope that one day people will realise just how stupid it is always to fight about it. And that people would decide to make some kind of agreement and everybody will be able to get on with their lives. And that there's like a lot more friendship between the ROI and NI so that we can just say that we're from Ireland and there won't be such a fake [unclear] about the Republic or Northern, just the fact that Ireland is all together so that we can say that we're from the UK and Britain as well because we are, because it's Northern Ireland. But I think that it would be nicer if everybody would be able just to not see so many divisions between people. (Protestant female, 15)

There were hopes for even bigger changes in the future. According to this Protestant male the whole island might possibly be one country in the future:

> Q: What do you think that future in Northern Ireland will be like?
>
> R: I personally think that it will be an all Ireland some day. I think that's the way it's tending or leaning towards. I think that it will be a bit safer as time goes on. But I definitely think that it will be an all Ireland, say in 50 years or something. In my lifetime. (Protestant male, 17)

5.5.3 Coping with the conflict

McGrellis (2005, 61) has pointed out that in contrast to previous generations, in the time of globalisation and facilitated movement between countries, some young people in Northern Ireland are reluctant to normalise the abnormal. She noticed that nearly 50% of the young people in the research sample wanted to move out of Northern Ireland. The same phenomenon was visible in this study, moving out of Northern Ireland was a dream of five interview participants, which counts to nearly a third of all of them. Not everyone mentioned the reason why they wanted to move away, some of them might have only wanted to explore the world out of excitement, like a Catholic girl who wanted to tour the world as a River dancer. Many of them, however, mentioned that at least one the reasons why they want to move abroad was all the trouble in Northern Ireland. Byrne

(1997) noticed in his study that it was only the young people with middle-class backgrounds, who had dreams of moving away from the Troubles of Northern Ireland and building up a better future in another country. His theory was that only they dared to dream about it because they knew that they could have the possibility to it in reality. According to him, working class youth thought that it would not be possible for them due to lack of economical and educational resources. Accordingly, they did not even dream about it. This was not entirely the case in this study. Four of the thirteen interview participants that responded to this question answered that their greatest dream would be going away. Consequently, four of the thirteen interview participants that responded to this question answered that their greatest dream would be going away. One of the young people who wanted to move away was a 14-year-old Protestant male with a working class background. On the other hand, there was a Protestant male from a working class neighbourhood who also wanted to live away from all the trouble but yet, he did not dream of moving away from Northern Ireland. His dream was only to find himself a farm somewhere, far from everyone else.

> Q: If your dreams were fulfilled, what would your life be like?
>
> R: Country, a big farm to yourself. Perfect. Away from everyone else, a few cornerback [unclear] what else could you ask for? (Protestant male, 17)

In this case Byrne's theory might be accurate. On the other hand, not all the young people with a middle class background dreamt about going abroad even though they might have had the opportunity to do it. Additionally, not all of them mentioned violence as the reason for this desire to move away. Two of them simply mentioned wanting to live abroad.

Intentions to "normalise the abnormal" in order to cope better with the situation were also found among my interview participants, as in many other studies (e.g. McEvoy 2000). When placing the conflict into the big picture, some interview participants came into the conclusion that Northern Ireland was not that special in that respect after all. There were fights in other countries as well. There were also countries that had more severe political problems than Northern Ireland.

> R1: If you watch Italian football, there are riots every day.
>
> R2: There are worse countries than us. (Protestant male, 17)
>
> Q: Do you have something else to say about these things that we have been talking about?
>
> R3: He told the truth. If you ask these question [unclear] there's people worse off than we do that have more political problems than we do. So you should be asking them these questions. (Protestant male, 15)
>
> R1: Like in America. (Protestant male, 14)

This Catholic male was also of the opinion that there was violence and paramilitaries everywhere in the world.

> R: Oh I'm sure that there is all over the world, everywhere there's young people getting guns. Wherever there is they are getting guns and they're fighting for their country. They're fighting for what they believe in. So I can't fault them, if they want to die then go ahead. … there are paramilitaries everywhere you go. No matter where you go, you are going to find them. Even where you live there's paramilitaries. I'm sure that if there's groups of people, I'm sure that there's always violence. Everywhere you get violence, no matter what. Come on. (Catholic male, 17)

It was him who had stated earlier that Ireland would never calm down and that the Troubles would be a permanent part of it so this indicates that he did understand the special character of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Even though a few interview participants considered the future to be similar or even a little worse, all in all, most of the young people that I interviewed were hopeful about the future in Northern Ireland. Most of them had positive visions on how things would turn out to be, even though they did not see any major changes taking place in the near future. Some young visionaries even saw a united Ireland in their own lifetime and had great hopes of a better and a more peaceful future together. Some interviewees reminded that, after all, there were also worse places than Northern Ireland.

6. Summary of the results and discussion

Even though most research participants in this study seemed to rather content with their lives in general, the conflict and the sectarian division of their society were still a substantial part of their lives. Some people had experienced it more strongly in their lives than others. When three interviewees stated that the conflict had not touched their lives in any way, they probably perceived the term conflict only as violence. In reality, all of them came across the sectarian division in their daily lives at schools, in their living environments, watching the news and moving around in the city. Possibly they were socialized to conceive the 'abnormal' as 'normal', as had been theorised by other researchers. Thus, these practices possibly seemed to them as part of normal life, not as something particular. In general, my interviewees saw the Troubles as a negative thing, most of the interviewees stated that nothing good had come out of the conflict. The young people were well aware of the history of the conflict, but there was variance in the opinions of the main protagonists. Some found paramilitaries to be responsible for it, some blamed politicians and others blamed regular people from both sides. This exemplifies well the intersectional character of the conflict, it is connected to most of the things that take place in the society. It is not only a political or religious phenomenon; as some interviewees smartly noted, the conflict is renewed and reconstructed in the daily life by regular citizens.

It can be seen that even though the conflict was much less intense, as it had been in the previous decades, in some areas it was still very visible. The majority of the interviewees who agreed to discuss their own experiences of the Troubles had been personally involved (nine interviewees out of n=14) in some sectarian incident. The severity of the incidents varied from having been asked for their denominational group to serious physical abuse and house attacks. An equal amount of interview participants were also aware of conflict-related incidents, where people that they knew had been involved. Many of these included bombs, sentences and even killings. The adversaries had been members of the other community in most incidents. Therefore, many young people restricted their mobility in the city because they were afraid of running into members of the other community in the wrong circumstances, which could have negative consequences. They were especially afraid to walk in school uniforms, by which they could be recognised as Catholics or Protestants. This need of avoidance of certain areas and general awareness when in public spaces seemed to be the most salient impact of the conflict in the daily lives of these young people.

In many incidents the adversary had been the police forces. Equally to other studies (e.g. Smyth et al. 2004), the young people did not in general think very highly about the police in Northern

Ireland. By the majority the police was seen as biased, ineffective, possibly corrupted and excessively violent. Female interviewees had better notions of the police than male participants. Possibly their more positive opinions were due to the lack of contact: only male participants had been in contact with the police in respect to the conflict. Some interview participants thought that the positive side of the Troubles was that people stood for what they believed in and that they defended their own rights. Apparently, the police forces and the justice system did not evoke much trust in some interviewees, therefore taking the law into their own hands was seen as a viable option. Throughout the conflict, there has been dissatisfaction and distrust with the police forces in Northern Ireland (Parkhill & Ferguson 2004, 32). Due to this, a police reform was implemented in 2001, in order to improve the police services. The comments of my interviewees, however, seem to reflect continuing dissatisfaction with the actions of the police within some sections of the population.

Besides members of the opposing community and the police, many interview participants had been part of or knew about conflict-related incidents involving the paramilitaries. After the peace process had started, there had been a shift of focus in the paramilitary violence, it was more concentrated on the dissidents within the own community. The so-called punishment beatings regarded especially young people in the community who had been involved in anti-social behaviour or done something else that the paramilitaries considered to be wrong. The punishment beatings consisted of various forms of violence, it was common to shoot the victim in the kneecaps, why it was also called kneecapping. One of my interview participants had suffered from different ways of torture and pressuring by the paramilitaries for several years after having committed actions against them. The amount of these incidents seems to be alarming, also other interview participants knew many other young people with similar experiences. Also the reports of the International Monitoring Commission (2006) indicate that a "culture of lawfulness" had been missing in Northern Ireland and human rights were not respected sufficiently. The IMC states that in the spring 2006 of hundreds of young offenders in the Restorative Justice Programs many had suffered from threats, exiling and violence in the hands of the paramilitaries. This is a very serious problem, under-aged young people –children in the eyes of the international law– should be protected from violence by using all possible means. The United Kingdom has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and so has committed to taking all appropriate measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence. It seems that no such measures had been taken if the paramilitaries were able to carry out these activities on such a wide scale.

Even though the results from this study confirm the results from other studies that denominational identities seem to remain strong among young people in Northern Ireland (e.g. Connolly & Healy

2004), the research participants did not seem to be very sectarian in their attitudes in general. The research participants did not see Protestants and Catholics as very different groups. Many interviewees mentioned that they were basically similar people with similar objectives but they were on two opposing sides because they competed for the same resources. Their relationship was seen as one of dichotomies: for many attributes an equivalent for the other community was also found. The interview participants thought that the differences between the two groups were based on religion, political ideologies and different cultural practices. There were even signs of dissolution of a clear division between the communities among some young people. In this study the traditional view about Catholics and Protestants as two different groups was contested by three interview participants. They refused to differentiate in any way between Catholics and Protestants, instead they stressed the similarities of the people in both groups.

Excluding a few interviewees, most research participants were not fundamentally against members of the other group. Most young people did not evaluate their own community or the other one with either positive or negative terms, the language used was quite neutral. There were no significant differences found in the attitudes between Catholics and Protestants or male and female research participants. Increasing contact with members of the other group signified increasing tolerance for the most part among these young people. The more a person had been in touch with members of the other community, the more tolerant attitudes he/she had towards them. The exceptions were for the more tolerant direction; there were young people who had not been very much in contact with the opposing group but who nevertheless were not sectarian in their attitudes. Possibly their lack of contact can be explained with the scarceness of possibilities to interact over the community boundaries. There were also positive examples of interaction over communal borders. Two interview participants in my study had had romantic cross-community relationships, which was a fairly big amount in a group of 16 considering the scarcity of such inter-communal relationships, which have not been appreciated in Northern Ireland after the beginning of the Troubles. On the other hand, one of these relationships was forced to be ended due to negative attitudes and intimidation from other people. However, also several other interview participants said that dating someone from the other community would not be a problem for them. The attitudes of these interview participants seem to indicate a positive change in the attitudes regarding inter-communal relationships, e.g. in the study of Kelly none of the participants felt that they could have a boy/girlfriend from the opposing group (Kelly 2002, 68). The two exceptions where contacts did not equal higher tolerance seemed to be caused by bad experiences. One boy was sectarian in his attitudes, even though he had had many opportunities to interact with members of the other community. However, apparently he had been mostly in contact always with the same people and

these experiences with members of the other group had been negative. The study of McLernon et al. (2004) revealed that intergroup forgiveness levels in Northern Ireland were considerably lower than in other similar conflict zones, which they found alarming considering the future in Northern Ireland. The attitudes of a Catholic female offered a good example of the deepness of the grudge in my study. In spite of her newly gained trust in Protestants and her Protestant friends, she said that she would nevertheless in the future tell her children not to trust them. The distrust caused by negative experiences in the past had not been replaced by the new, more positive experiences. In the end she placed more emphasis on the negative experiences. Siobhan McEvoy-Levy (2001, 93) has noted that random encounters in small groups are different from mass confrontations, such as marching zones, since besides an intergroup-dynamic they activate an interpersonal dynamic as well. The power of these incidents is therefore greater, because they happen outside an area of anticipated violence. Both of these interviewees, whose negative experiences had left them with a long-lasting grudge, mentioned especially these kinds of face-to-face interpersonal incidents when they referred to their disability/unwillingness to trust the other group.

Many young people were aware of the hatred and bitterness that existed in Northern Ireland in both groups towards members of the other community. I wanted to know how the conflict and the sectarian division were discussed at homes and schools. People in Northern Ireland have been found to be very community-bound, and especially they value strong family ties (e.g. Smyth & al. 2004). This appreciation was also visible in this study, as many were concerned about problems in the family and social isolation and loosing important people were seen as the biggest threats. Problems with friends or other people were not mentioned, which seems to highlight the greater importance of the family. However, despite the importance of family relationships, the results of this study support the theory of "keeping the silence" in Northern Ireland (e.g. Smyth et al. 2004). According to the interviewees the conflict was not much discussed in families or in school. On the other hand, most of the interviewees acknowledged that young people were raised to think in a certain way about members of the other community. In their opinion the role of the family was very strong in respect to the development of sectarian/non-sectarian attitudes. Therefore, despite this silence concerning incidents of the conflict, apparently many families transmitted in some ways their thoughts about the other group to their children. For my interviewees, school seemed to play a passive part in this in the sense that in most schools the problems connected to the coexistence of different communities in Northern Ireland were not discussed. Apparently, in 2006, despite the peace process, the Troubles was still a subject that could not be discussed in an open manner. Therefore, schools did neither enhance sectarian attitudes, nor hinder their development through common

discussions. Schools could contribute greatly to increasing tolerance in the Northern Ireland society if a conscious effort was put to peace education (also Machel 1996).

In principle most young people in this study were open to getting to know members of the other group, it was only due to practical reasons that they did not find it adequate or simply were not able to socialize with them. The lack of opportunities for common activities was visible in the answers of my interviewees; unfortunately there were many who had had only scarce contacts with members of the other group. As McGrellis points out, little effort has been devoted to the development of viable public spaces. So far the young people have unfortunately maintained the belief that even leisure spaces ´belong´ to one side or the other. Investment on one side has hence been seen as disadvantage for the other. She notes that the social contacts that are developed through leisure can have a potentially positive effect in building cross-community networks. (McGrellis 2005, 68-69.) My interview participants expressed views that support this, some interview participants said that in principle they did not have anything against getting to know people from the other community. It was the lack of opportunities for gathering together that hindered them: they did not find it meaningful to get to know people, if they would not be able to spend time with them on a regular basis later.

As was discussed in the chapter 2, even though they vary in their practical realities, young people do occupy a similar role and position in the society and therefore they often have similar interests. Freetime activities outside family life and school are important to most young people and mass media and cultural industry are a big part of their lives. Many interview participants in this study expressed their concern for having "nothing to do". It was mentioned that the lack of freetime options drove young people to the streets and according to them, this was one of the reasons why many of them became involved in violence or joined criminal groups. Similarly, also research participants in the Smyth study manifested that they would not like to live in a community without riots because there was nothing else to do. Rioting has in some places even become known as "recreational rioting". (Smyth 1998, McGrellis 2005.) As Desmond Bell writes, it has to be kept in mind that since the physical mobility of many young people is restricted, so are their opportunities for recreation as well. (Bell 1987, 159.) Smyth (1998, 79) writes that in Northern Ireland young people are often marginalised in their own communities especially in the poorer areas, because adults fear them and therefore they are not allowed to gather in communal spaces. In this study, all the interviewees who complained about scarce freetime alternatives were from poor areas, which have accordingly high levels of sectarian violence. Young people in the talkshops organized by Young National Children's Bureau had similar complaints: they explained that they had nowhere to

go due to the inaccessibility of local parks, the high prices of leisure centres and generally scarce freetime options for young people (Kelly 2002, 66).

It has been noted in many studies that cross-community programs have not changed the denominational identities of young people (e.g. Byrne 1997). It has to be kept in mind, however, that such programs mostly consist of only passing encounters before the two groups return to their own sides (e.g. Sinclair et a. 2004). Possibly more long lasting alternatives for freetime encounters in 'neutral' and safe spaces could have better results and offer positive experiences with members of the other community. In the best case common interests and shared activities would create feelings of togetherness instead of highlighting the differences between the two groups. In the right circumstances new kinds of communities could be created, which could be based on something else than the denominational group of the young people. There were several examples of this among my interview participants, many of them had hobbies where there were both Protestants and Catholics. All of them thought that the members of their hobby groups created a community. What the denominational group of the members was, was not significant, they were bound together by their common interest in the hobby.

However, as long as the housing remains segregated and it is unsafe to enter the area of the other group, getting to know the other group's way of living is challenging. Even though most of my interviewees could describe the other community with some attributes, when asked about differences in their lifestyles, many of them had to admit that they did not know about it. Surprisingly, even such young people who had had many and long lasting contacts with people from the other group, were not aware of their lifestyle. This seems to suggest that even though people from the two groups can interact on many levels on the society, i.a. in schools or working places, the segregation in housing seems to remain a strong factor that keeps the two communities alienated from each other's everyday life. Integrated schools were found to be a good solution for increasing tolerance by many interview participants and those interviewees who had attended an integrated school were content with it. This has been noted also in other studies conducted among pupils of integrated schools.

I begun this thesis by talking about the fact that instead of being a homogeneous group, in reality there are different groups of youth with different circumstances and possibilities in life. Belfast youth are no exception. Consequently, as "social class does not take a vacation in a war zone" (Garbarino et al. 1991, 151), many disadvantaged families have become more deprived through the conflict. It has been noted in many studies (e.g. Muldoon 2004) that the areas that have been most affected by the conflict are the poorest ones in Belfast and Northern Ireland. The results from this

study confirmed this for their part as well. The interviewees with a middle class background lived in peaceful areas, where there was no sectarian violence, according to them. They did not have many experiences of the conflict in general. Most of the interviewees with a working-class background, in turn, lived in interface-areas where there were not only sectarian violent incidents, but also intra-communal violence took place. They had more experiences of the conflict and their experiences were much more severe than those of their middle-class counterparts. The greatest fears of my interview participants dealt with social and economical marginalisation. This is understandable considering that Northern Ireland is still the economically most disadvantaged area in the United Kingdom, and unemployment is high in many areas. Many interview participants also mentioned that one or both of their parents were unemployed or worked in low-wage professions. Possibly a similar future appeared as a rather realistic threat to the young people. Additionally, some interview participants had already from a young age experienced unemployment and homelessness. Some of these young people also felt that their living conditions did not equal to those of many other people in Belfast. As the neighbourhoods where these young people lived are among the most deprived in the whole Europe (McEvoy-Levy 2001, 94), this was probably true.

Whether one is Catholic or Protestant seemed to have an impact on the lives and possibilities of these young people as well. Of those interview participants, who had an opinion on the lifestyles of the two groups, half considered their lifestyles to be alike. The other half, on the other hand, considered that social and economical opportunities were not equal for the two groups. The opinions were not convergent, however, it was thought that both sides were oppressed. A group of Protestants thought that Catholics were favoured by politicians at the expense of Protestants. Their greatest concern seemed to be the housing policy, they felt that Catholics were given better houses and residential areas and that Protestants were being pushed aside because of that. All of the young Protestants who felt oppressed lived in a deprived area of Belfast, where unemployment was high and sectarian violence was commonplace. Looking at the statistics (e.g. Whyte 1998, 605-606), it has been the Catholics who have suffered more from unemployment, have had lower wages and, at least in the previous decades, worse living conditions. Only one Catholic, however, commented on the difference between the consuming habits and wealth of Protestants and Catholics, Protestants being wealthier. Additionally, one Protestant also noted that Catholics were more discriminated due to prejudices. It is possible that through reforms the situation of the Catholic population has improved and young people do not see a major difference in the standard of living of the two groups anymore. Another alternative is that living apart keeps the young people unaware of the possible existing inequalities. As discussed before, passing to the residential areas where members of the other group live is not an option to many young people in Belfast, which leaves the living

conditions of people from the other side of the sectarian division unfamiliar. Many of the young people who I interviewed were not working yet, hence it is possible that they had not paid much attention to salaries or possible differences in them, either.

There has also been a difference in the possibility to express the denominational culture in public space. When the young people were talking about denominational cultural practices and symbols, for the most part only Protestant ones were mentioned. Neither Catholics themselves nor Protestants, besides one person, mentioned Catholic cultural symbols. The British rule and the majority position of Protestants can be seen reflected in this; the Protestants have in the past had better possibilities to develop a culture of visible denominational traditions in public space (also Jarman 2000). The marching season has mostly been about Protestant celebrations, and the Catholics have not had a chance to create cultural practices equivalent in magnitude.

There were some phenomena where there were differences between the genders among my research participants. As noticed also in other studies (Muldoon 2004), boys have in general more experiences of violence than girls. In my study also one girl had been victim to violence, several times, but the rest of the girls had no such experiences. All the interviewees who had taken part in sectarian violence were male. Accordingly, also all the young people who had been in contact with the police were male. Among the research participants of this study politics seemed to interest boys more, no girls claimed to be interested in politics in the sense that they would follow it. Jean Whyte (1998, 617) has reminded that for a long time the politics in Northern Ireland had for the most part been dominated by men, therefore the girls' low interest rates in politics could be explained by the lack of role models in this field. However, when they were introduced the possibility of participating in society through politics, it was two girls who were interested in it. None of the boys were prepared to commit themselves personally, even though they were interested in the subject.

I wanted to examine whether characteristics that have been theorised to be typical for youth in late modernity were found also among my research participants in Northern Ireland similarly to Finnish youth. Indeed, I found their thoughts to be quite convergent with the results that had been attained with Finnish youth. Most of my interview participants did not mention any big ideologies guiding their lives. As the two opposing groups are divided by their denominationalism, one might think that religion would be an important theme to the people in Northern Ireland. The importance of religion there has also been noted in many earlier studies. My interviews showed, however, that at least these young people were not particularly religious. Many of them proclaimed to be atheists and were of the opinion that religion was not important at all, many were simply indifferent to it. A minority of three persons expressed that religion was in some manner important to them. According

to this, the secular tendency connected to late modernity that has been visible in other Western countries for some time, seems to be advancing in Northern Ireland as well. If the importance of religion was diminishing, it might have a softening effect on the attitudes towards the other community. At least these young people saw religion as the greatest difference between the two groups.

In other studies young people had classified political violence to be a working-class phenomenon (Connolly & Healy 2004, Byrne 1997) but in this study social class was not mentioned in any context. Possibly it was not perceived as an important ideological resource by the young people. It could be assumed that nationalism would be important in a region which has been in the crossfire of two nations and which is populated by two groups with distinctive ethnic identities. It turned out to be more important to my interviewees than religion was: half of the contestants thought that nationality was important to them. Both Irish as well as British nationalities were referred to. No-one identified himself solely as Northern Irish. The Northern Ireland identity was mentioned only once as supplementary to the British. I noted that school influences the pupils' thinking about nationality in a certain way. At school young people learn about their own community and they learn to act as decent citizens in their own society. Therefore the syllabus in many Northern Ireland schools makes a suggestion on the preferred national identity of their pupils when Irish history and language are left aside and English equivalents are emphasised. The young people are, after all, entitled to the citizenship of both countries, therefore one could expect both of them to be present in the school curricula. An interesting finding was, however, that also one Protestant interviewee identified himself to be Irish instead of British. It was particularly remarkable because he was one of those interviewees who had not had many contacts with Catholics, therefore the most probable choice for him would have been the British identity. He did not mention having any specific ties to the Republic of Ireland, therefore it is difficult to infer why his feeling of identity had developed differently from the most Protestants in Northern Ireland.

Some young people seemed to be still motivated by ideologies. Some of them said that they were "fighting the cause", but it was not quite clear what this referred to, since neither nationality nor strict sectarianism were important to some of them. To this section of my interview participants it seemed to be more local issues, the safety and well-being of their immediate community that concerned them, as they felt disadvantaged in these. Lacking other opportunities of participation and of having their voices heard, joining the paramilitaries was probably the closest and therefore easiest option. After all, feelings of social and economic injustice and seeking personal revenge are often among the reasons that drive young people to join armed groups (Goodwin-Gill & Cohn 1994). Since these young people lived in a deprived neighbourhood and had suffered in many ways

from the conflict, these were likely reasons. As Garbarino et al. (1991) have noted, ideology can be an important psychological resource for young people in the midst of armed conflicts.

Individualism and a certain type of hedonism were also found in the answers of my interviewees when they talked about their dreams and fears. It was important to them to do something personally meaningful with their lives. Some interview participants feared that they would end up doing something that they did not really find interesting or fulfilling. This finding is parallel to Helve's findings about contemporary Finnish youth's post-materialistic values and the need to do something meaningful with their lives. A sign of hedonism could also be seen in the replies of many interviewees who in otherwise favoured young people's participation in politics but thought that it was too stressful or demanding a job for them to get personally involved. When examining their interest in parliamentary politics and participation in society, I discovered that the notions of politics were not very positive among most of my interviewees. Similarly to Finland, also the young people in Northern Ireland seem to be frustrated and angry at politicians, which has been found in other studies as well (e.g. Muldoon 2004). Among my interviewees it was commonly thought that the politicians did not really accomplish anything, they only talked. In addition, politics was seen as difficult to understand and not as something that would interest young people of their age. None of the interviewees supported any political parties. Only four of the total 13 interviewees who answered the questions about politics demonstrated interest in the subject. Additionally, three out of four were Protestants, only one Catholic interview participant found politics to be interesting. This was contrary to other studies, where Catholics have been more interested in politics (Whyte 1998). As well as in Finland, young people in Northern Ireland have felt that they do not have a place in politics (e.g. Muldoon 2004). My interviewees had similar opinions. Even though there was interest, it was not clear to them what they could do, or could they do anything.

The disinterest and distrust in politics was, fortunately, not reflected in the research participants' attitudes about participation in society. As in the study of Sinclair et al. (2004), my interviewees thought that youth could make a difference if they were given the opportunity. The majority of them found it to be a good idea that young people participated in the management of common issues. The interviewees thought that young people could bring new, fresh ideas to politics. They should make positive changes in Northern Ireland and end the cycle of violence. However, even though nearly all were in favour of youth involvement in societal issues, not everyone was willing to commit themselves to it, which had also been the case in Whyte's study (1998). The research participants in this study mentioned that politics was too demanding and difficult. Moving forward from the current unsatisfactory political situation seemed to be too a big challenge for some, they did not know what young people could actually do. Five interview participants had either already been

involved in societal issues or demonstrated interest in it. The two interviewees who were willing to go into politics if they would have a convenient possibility were both female. The remaining three interview participants did not mention parliamentary politics but they had already been connected to paramilitary activities that were politically motivated. Unfortunately we did not have the possibility to discuss their interest in participating in parliamentary politics or other official institutions. Smyth et al. (2004) noted in their study that a certain type of socialisation to violence could be found among the young research participants in their study. The results in my study support this finding. Even though most interview participants were against violence and paramilitary activities, some of them had participated in political violence. All interview participants also unanimously thought that there were many young people in Northern Ireland who participated in political violence. Many interviewees knew such people personally. Only one person had been involved in NGO-activities, it was one of the girls who were interested in political participation. Lamentably my questions concerned only parliamentary politics. It would have been useful and interesting to broaden the discussion to include also NGOs and other institutions that work with societal issues to see whether research participants would have been prepared to participate in that level.

I discovered that those interviewees who placed personal importance to their nationality were not more interested in societal participation than those who did not find it important, contrary to the findings of Whyte (1998). Instead, I noticed that conflict-related experiences seemed to motivate young people to act on common issues. The research participants with the most experiences were the most motivated to participate. McEvoy has also noted that the young people that had the least experiences of the conflict were the most pessimistic about it, the ones with more personal experiences were more hopeful. She concluded that feelings of injustice and sufferings motivate young people to act on a change. (McEvoy 2000.) Consequently, also the young people in my study who were interested in participation showed recognition of social problems either by feeling deprived of equal opportunities themselves or by having noticed discrimination towards another group of people in their society. The interview participants did not seem to be very aware of the political beliefs of their parents, at least they did not mention anything about them. Only one interviewee mentioned having a relative in politics. His opinion on politics seemed to be more positive than the interviewees had in general.

It seems that global tendencies and social change have in many ways had similar impacts on the lives and values of young people in Northern Ireland and in Finland. The forms that they take seem to be, however, in some matters a little distinctive. These differences can be explained by the different situation caused by the conflict in Northern Ireland. As a result of a change of emphasis from traditional politics to "new" politics, Finnish young people have often been noticed to be

working for societal issues in small, local projects. A great amount of them have concentrated on environmental issues and globalisation. In this study none of the interviewees mentioned either one of these issues. The ways of participation were, however, similar in the sense that they were also projects that were working on a local scale. One interviewee had worked in an NGO, the theme of the project was connected to the conflict. Helping paramilitary organisations can also be considered to be a local project, which is situated outside parliamentary politics. Therefore the conflict seems to have gathered all the attention of the research participants in this study in terms of societal issues. Possibly other phenomena such as the negative sides of globalisation or the global warming feel more distant and of minor importance to them compared to the still very acute problem in their own immediate environment. Nationality as an ideology seems to be important to many of these young people. Another distinctive finding caused by the conflict was that besides that young people felt that politicians did not fulfill their promises, many young people in this study also had the opinion that politicians in Northern Ireland had even a negative impact on the society. They thought that politicians showed a negative example to the public by not getting along with each other and they provoked more anger in the citizens.

McGrellis (2005, 57) reminds that young people in Northern Ireland are in a difficult situation, because on the other hand they are expected to take responsibility inheriting the mantle of their parents' culture, which might be violent, but on the other hand they need to make their choices in a different social world. The choices that their parents have made might not be possible or suitable anymore in the time of late modernity. A change for a more peaceful direction could be seen in the attitudes of my research participants. All of the interview participants thought that the violence should be ended and peace should be attained in Northern Ireland. However, as there were differences of opinion in who were the responsible ones for the conflict, there were differences also in the preferred solutions for the conflict. The majority of them were of the opinion that increased integration would be a way forward. On the other hand, a group of young people thought that the most efficient way of reaching peace would be effective separation of the two communities either to different states or with a concrete obstacle within Northern Ireland. Half of my research participants favoured maintaining segregation in some form in Northern Ireland, either only in housing, or both in housing as well as in education. Less than half of them thought that members of the other community were bad *per sé*, instead most of them favoured segregation only for security reasons, they feared that too much integration would lead to violent confrontations. There were also interview participants who personally favoured more integration but who also reminded that threats to common safety was still an issue connected to interaction between the two groups.

Visions about the future in Northern Ireland were also various. Three interviewees thought that the Troubles would not end, they could even escalate in the future. Most of the research participants, however, hoped that things would eventually take a turn for the better, but they were not very confident of it. One interview participant believed that within his lifetime the whole island of Ireland would be one state. Meanwhile, similarly to results from other studies (Smyth et al. 2004, Byrne 1997), also many of my interview participants were planning to escape all the unrest abroad. Those who had no such dreams had, however, also their ways of coping with the pressures of the conflict. They highlighted that, in the end, Northern Ireland was not such a bad place to live in, there was trouble and violence in all parts of the world.

7. Conclusions

The comments of my interviewees indicate that there has been a shift to a more tolerant direction in the attitudes of the youth in Northern Ireland. The great majority of my interviewees were not sectarian in their attitudes, instead they were open to get to know members of the other community. Many of them even wished to do so. If these young people are allowed opportunities to influence in society, probably a turn for the better will be taken, since all of them wish to end the cycle of violence and find a peaceful solution. Clearly, there is no unanimity in what the possible solutions could be. Safety is still a big issue in the Northern Ireland society and many interviewees thought that safe interaction is not possible. I wanted to examine, whether living amidst of a conflict-affected society politicises youth in a different way than living in peaceful society considering these interview participants. It seems that rather than interested in politics, the young people in Northern Ireland are frustrated in it, similarly to young people in Finland. Therefore, if the conflict has had an impact on their views of politics, the answers of my interviewees seem to suggest that it has been for the negative direction. Because of the conflict, the term politics has a negative connotation. However, it can be seen that these young interview participants are very enthusiastic about the possibility of youth participation. Possibly the peace process has evoked the possibility of a change in the minds of the young people. However, they do not see a place for youth in the management of common issues. Also the lack of freetime options was a concern for many interview participants. Hopefully there will be improvement in this area in a way, which enables positive interaction between youth from the two communities. Especially creating possibilities for youth participation in common issues would be positive.

It needs to be kept in mind that I have only interviewed 15 young people for this study. Therefore the results are not reliable in the sense that they are not statistically representative. However, the opinions and attitudes of this group of young people in Belfast indicate some tendencies. The answers attained in this study can be used as a base for a survey study for finding, whether bigger numbers of youth in Northern Ireland think in the same way. Since the spring 2006 there has been progress in the peace process in Northern Ireland, an important agreement was made between the two parties one year later. However, the sectarian conflict is still reality and violence has continued (see IMC 2008). There are still many challenged to be faced when aiming for a more tolerant, equal and peaceful society in Northern Ireland. In conclusion, as youth are the future leaders of this society, their involvement with a bigger volume in its development will be for the common good.

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