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The Maidens of the Maiden City

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INTRODUCTION

I come from a family of very strong women. My great grandmother was a feisty lady who lived until she was 99, I have watched my grandmother nurse and care for my dying grandfather for the past 10 years or so, always with a smile on her face and without so much as the slightest complaint, and my mother is always prepared and ready to face every situation and care for our family, often putting us ahead of herself. Because of these wonderful influences, for a very long time I took women’s strength and perseverance for granted and was not aware of just how remarkable it is. It wasn’t until very recently, after taking several university classes on women’s studies and becoming more personally involved in women’s issues that I came to realize exactly what feminism was to me. Apart from the man-hating, bra-burning stereotypes, I think that feminism has a very strong message about the special role that women play as unique members of society and I think that feminism and feminist study in particular has a lot to offer about the way we all, and especially me as a woman, view the world.

It has also been my experience that women are extremely concerned with interpersonal relations and building up strong communities wherever they go. I am very fortunate to have about four moms, outside of my family; living in a small neighborhood, all of the wonderful family friends who I have grown up with have created a close community bond and have become like family to me. Furthermore, I have a very close, tight-knit group of girlfriends that have sustained me through many trying times, and with whom I’ve created my own community and support system. Even here in Ireland, among our own group, it is remarkable to me, how quickly we were able to bond and come together to create “Team Ireland.” On the more formal scale, my mother is extremely active in an all women’s volunteer organization that works through a program of education, advocacy, and community service to better the lives of women and families worldwide. All of these positive experiences throughout my life have

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instilled in me a strong feminist feeling and a desire to formally study the ways that women can come together for the betterment of society at large.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

The theme of my project has been molding and shaping for slightly less than a year now. I have always been extremely interested in peace-building and I've chosen to structure my whole course of study, both here and in the States, around it. And while for years, I had kept my interests in women's studies compartmentalized in a different category, I was thrilled last September when my peace studies professor, Matthew Evangelista, suggested that there was a natural integration of the two. Fast forward to April where I was left with the task of building up a research project that would provide me an in depth case study of an aspect of life in Northern Ireland that could be used for later work as a microcosm of situations and relations world wide.

I began this project with Gandhi's premise in mind that women have a unique natural propensity for non-violent action and peace-building. As he said, “If nonviolence is the law of our being, the future is with women.” Women are often seen as the glue in families and communities, and are thought of as focusing on groups and cooperative relations in place of more individualistic and competitive, typically male methods of interaction. Whether or not this is true, one can not deny the fact that women do have many commonalities and bonds that can transcend borders and boundaries. Especially in situations of intensive and long standing ethnic conflict, the women in the society all share experiences and emotions that provide them with a unique position from which to move forward towards building a better, more peaceful society. I therefore set out to explore the role that women have played in cross – community relationships and peace building throughout the troubles in Northern Ireland to come to a better idea of whether or not women are more adept at peace making and to witness this work in action. While I knew

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that there were truly no answers out there, I began with certain questions and curiosities that I hoped to at the very least debate and dissect:

- ✦ Do women feel a sense of shared experience and feel a connection with other women regardless of their other affiliations?
- ✦ Is it ever possible that this bond of womanhood can supersede connections to ethnic, racial, or religious groups?
- ✦ Are difference feminists correct in thinking that men and women are inherently different in their biological and social capabilities? If so, are there certain skills or characteristics that make women better peace makers / keepers than men?
- ✦ Is there something in women’s experience that makes them inclined towards non-violence? And if so, what is it?
- ✦ Are women more represented and in more leadership roles in the community development, peace building fields? Why is this?
- ✦ How do women work? As individuals? In groups?
- ✦ What can women do together? What are their strengths and advantages?
- ✦ What opportunities are open to them? And what are their limitations? What prejudices are there against women in this field?
- ✦ How do women working in the peace and community building field impact themselves? Their groups? Society?

After much wavering, I decided to limit my research to the women of Derry, as opposed to attempting a broader overview of women’s lives in both Derry and Belfast. It was therefore imperative that I become fully engaged in the city and allow myself to be completely immersed in the life there to achieve a deep and thorough understanding. Derry, a relatively small city, works as one giant network of interconnected and extremely involved individuals and organizations. Therefore, by connecting with a few key people in the community relations field, I hoped that the whole world of peace building in Derry would open up to me. I found that I was constantly encountering the same people; it was definitely the case in Derry that those who do, do it all. Upon arrival, I was slightly disappointed to find that because of Easter holiday, most of the individuals that I was hoping to speak with were not available until the following Monday. But I used the extra time I was given to fiddle with my interview questions and continue with some background reading into women and war and peace building.

Because of the time limitations, from the start I was aware that most of my information would be based upon interviews and informal observations. And whether I was aware of it or not, because

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these people and experiences would to a certain extent define my project, the choices that I made at this stage reflected quite heavily upon my own personal opinions and beliefs at the outset.

One of the most important lessons that I took from Northern Ireland was the value placed on precise language and terminology. To most Americans, unfamiliar with Northern Ireland, the amount of attention lavished on the little details might seem pompous or nit-picky, however slight linguistic distinctions surrounded me in the North, so when in Rome... The importance of terminology is only part and parcel of an atmosphere, saturated with high context clues that enable people to situate themselves and evaluate their surroundings appropriately. The value that is placed on vocabulary is made apparent simply with the emphasis that people place on what you choose to call the place itself. The two little words that make the slight distinction between calling the country “Northern Ireland” and “the North of Ireland” are crucially important. Similarly, the very place that I chose to conduct my research, “Derry stroke Londonderry,” as the politically correct would say, is a city of contested lexicography¹. These slight variations in the way that different people speak and refer to key terms are constant reminders of the high-context social cues that inform the social interactions in the North. Natives there can derive so much valuable information from simple, seemingly empty, words and as an outsider it is crucial to keep this in mind while not hesitating to question and clarify.

Definition of Terms

Along this vein, it is imperative that I firmly establish the meaning behind the terms used. Many of the concepts and themes involved in peace work or in the softer social sciences in general are often ambiguous, difficult words to define, and they can mean very different things to different people or in different contexts. My project in its simplest most refined explanation was a study of women and peace

¹ In this project I will be referring to the city of Derry/Londonderry as Derry merely for the sake of brevity and not for any political reasons or personal leanings that I might have. Officially the city is called Derry and the county is called Londonderry. Also from my observations it seemed that most locals referred to the city as Derry except when trying to make a statement or stay politically correct. One Protestant woman even commented on the absurdity of bickering about the name of the city. “We all call it Derry,” she said. And so, it is with that in mind that I have taken the liberty of calling the city Derry, hopefully without causing much offense.

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building in Derry; however, all aspects of the topic can be picked apart and broken down to further clarify what I was trying to achieve.

As a broad category, “women” generally refers to females over the age of 18. However within this grouping there exist an abundance of further identities and sub-groupings, for instance: age, class, religion, education level, marital status, sexual orientation, profession. These many different classifications impact heavily upon the woman in question, providing her with unique circumstances, opportunities, privileges, and barriers. Each woman’s individual experience is inimitably crafted by the interacting aspects of her identity, and therefore it is extremely difficult to speak in terms of women in general. For this project, I hoped to tap into the experiences of many different women, spanning these many different identities to piece together what life in Derry is like for women. I particularly tried to pay attention to religion, age, and class to make sure that the view I was developing was not skewed.

I managed to witness a pretty diverse sample of age groups in Derry, ranging from about 9 years to 89 years, by speaking with professionals, participants in adult education, and members of the youth club. In the youth club I was able to observe life for teens and young adults, and I was able to pick up on some of their attitudes from informal conversation, however I unfortunately did not have the time or appropriate opportunity to speak with them specifically about my project. Class was a slightly more difficult variable to monitor as it is more difficult to determine from first glance and I was not comfortable asking the women about their personal finances or economic situation. However, based on the information gathered through interviews and from the pamphlets and program descriptions I was able to tap into the ways that socio-economic class also affects the women in Derry.

Peace building is an extremely difficult term to define, as it is hard to even pin down what exactly peace is. Many of the people that I spoke with were eager to provide me with their accounts of what peace is not, and fortunately for the most part, these ideas fit nicely with my own preconceptions of what I think peace should be. Johan Galtung and Michael Salla describe the distinction between what

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can be termed negative peace and positive peace. In their analysis negative peace merely consists of the absence of direct personal violence and manages the conflict on an individual level. Positive peace, on the other hand, deals with the deeper cultural and structural levels of violence, and aims to establish a society with systems and structures that embrace and support inclusion, equality, and fair treatment for all. To a great extent these concepts informed my own personal definition of what a society in peace should look like and in turn what would be necessary to go about peace building. It is quite obvious to me that despite the cease-fire and peace settlements that have been made in Northern Ireland conflict is still prevalent and therefore there must be more to peace than the absence of direct physical violence.

As Mary Nelis told me in our interview, “keeping peace is very different than making peace. It requires a lot of effort, and trust, and risks, and belief. Keeping peace must engage the grassroots people.”

Interviews

In general I would say that my interviews were pretty successful and I was fortunate to be able to garner much information from the people with whom I spoke. I set out with a list of several key individuals who have been extremely influential women in Derry and who could provide insights into the ways that women have been building peace and developing the community. At my first meeting with my advisor, Cora Baker, she warned me not to get disappointed should my contacts not be available, as they were very busy and important people. Knowing how prone I am to suffering from disappointment, I was slightly concerned, but I just kept my fingers crossed and forged ahead. After constant badgering bordering on stalking, I was able to secure appointments with many wonderful women and men who were unbelievable wellsprings of knowledge. There were however some additional individuals (Diane Greer, Margaret Logue, and Maureen Hetherington) who were unable to meet with me but might have been very helpful. The following is a list of the individuals with whom I held formal interviews and brief biographical sketches.

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☞ **Monica Doherty, Deidre O’Hara, and Mary Gill - Well Women Centre**

The Well Women Centre grew out of the growing recognition of the inadequacies of the Health Service and the need for another option for women. The Centre, through a wide range of different therapies, courses and trainings, and support groups for women, has become a place for women to feel comfortable and confident; to discuss, share and tackle their health needs as women on their own terms; to be informed about statutory services and those of other agencies and to then make informed choices about how best to meet their individual needs and to do so with the support of other women.

☞ **Joanna Walker, Women’s Officer - Derry City Council**

Recently appointed the Women’s Officer to the Derry City Council, Joanna works to promote the role of women within the Derry City Council area through raising awareness within Council of the issues affecting women and by working closely with the local community and voluntary sector to identify new development opportunities for local women. She is a native of the Waterside and has worked extensively with the Youth Service. In her new role, Joanna hopes to facilitate women’s participation in local decision-making and also plans to offer a series of courses for women in assertiveness skills, interview skills and assistance in filling out grant application claims.

☞ **Jeanette Warke - Shared City Project and Cathedral Youth Club**

The Shared City Initiative was formed as a statutory response to the alienation and marginalization within predominantly unionist/loyalist/protestant areas of the city. The project has established a wide network within estate based community groups both Catholic and Protestant. The SCI aims to create an atmosphere in which every citizen feels part of the city and district, by enabling marginalized communities to identify and address the issues which contribute to their sense of alienation from the life of a shared city. They hope to work with estate based community groups to provide direct and accessible community development support, and to increase the skills level and knowledge necessary for community development with a specific focus on project development, accessing funding and project management. The

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Cathedral Youth Club was founded by Jeanette and her late husband David to provide a place and unique space for children and teens of the Fountain area. Through educational classes, discussion groups, field trips, and events with the wider community the Youth Club has been extremely active in promoting the development of the youth into responsible and active community members. Jeanette is an absolutely amazing women whose many achievements fit no description. She has been extremely active in the community working to get others involved developing the community and connecting across the divide. Jeanette is the mastermind behind such projects as the Women into Irish History and We Too Have Suffered as well as many other support groups and initiatives.

☞ **Catherine Cooke - Peace and Reconciliation Group**

The Peace and Reconciliation Group (PRG) was founded as a local group of the Northern Ireland Peace People. It is now an independent body, continuing the grassroots work in the communities of Derry/Londonderry. The work of PRG involves building bridges between the religious/cultural communities that have been polarised by the historical and political events that have occurred in Northern Ireland over the past 30 years. It strives to improve intra- and inter-community relations, to set in place building blocks for the proactive development of community relations practice, and to develop opportunities and programmes ensuring that the community has the skills and resources to make community relations an essential part of overall development. Catherine, the Project/Training Officer, has run many successful programs including: Women into Politics, Youth Exchanges, Cross Border Youth and Citizenship Project, Single Identity Work, Interface, Peer Education/Peer Leadership, Corrymeela Family Holidays and Changing Relations Programme. Catherine sits on a number of steering groups including the Local Strategy Partnership, the Tullyally and District Development Group and the Waterside Area Partnership.

☞ **Eamonn Deane - Holywell Trust**

The Holywell Trust was created from the perceived need for an organisation which would encourage risk taking and stimulate creativity in the community sector of the North-West. The Trust's activities can be summarised under four headings: Initiatives, Support, Partnership and Community Education and Training. These activities have been directed towards groups and

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individuals in the following areas: community development, empowerment, community relations, personal development, community arts and environmental issues. Furthermore it strives to to organise training courses, conferences and seminars on issues of public concern and interest; to facilitate the processes of healing within and between people so that we may move forwards as whole, interdependent individuals; to publish books, magazines, pamphlets and brochures that encourage broad community participation in decision-making; to encourage individual and civic transformation through partnership, innovation, and the development of a new enabling vision for the North-West; to emphasise the importance of culture, history and heritage of the North-West in informing the development of new approaches to cross-community relations work. Eamonn, the director at Holywell Trust, since 1988, was a long serving Trustee of NIVT and is on the Board of CRC and the Local Strategy Partnership. He has contributed to and is being involved with developments affecting community development work throughout the past number of years in Northern Ireland.

☞ **Mrs. Jordan, Mrs. Cartwright, Mrs. Avril Campbell, and Mrs. Beth Neely**

- **Women into Irish History Group**

The Women into Irish History Group are a cross community group of dedicated women who have come together for several years now to focus a course of study on the history of Ireland, and Derry in particular. They feel very strongly that a firm understanding of the past is the only way to truly comprehend the events that affect us in the present. Through both lectures and in the field learning, these women have covered numerous historical events from the establishment of Derry, to the two World Wars. Furthermore they cover certain aspects that are typically seen along sectarian lines to create understanding and a sense of the shared history that informs the lives of all the people in Derry. The women are currently working on their second publication, and are at present on a week long trip to visit the site of the Battle of the Somme, which they have studied at great length.

☞ **Joy Smyth, involved community member**

Joy is a very active member of the Fountain community and in addition to volunteering at the Cathedral Youth Club has participated in many of the programs and initiatives of the Shared

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City Project including: the Women into Politics course, Women into Irish History Course, We Too Have Suffered group, and several art, computer and other personal development classes.

☞ **Mary Nelis, Sinn Fein counselor**

Mary Nelis is a mother of nine children, community activist and Sinn Féin councillor. Born in the Bogside area of Derry City she has been active in community and women's groups throughout her life. She campaigned for and initiated the first community group in Creggan in the 1960's and was also involved in organising the local women's group. She was the founder member in the seventies of the Relatives Action Committee, she founded Dove House with young people as a resource centre and she helped set up the Templemor Co-op in to give employment to local women. Mary was a member of the SDLP for two years before joining Sinn Féin in 1980. She was elected as a Sinn Féin Councillor for the Northlands area of Derry in 1992 and as Assembly member for Foyle in 1998. She was re-elected to the Assembly in November 2003. In the last Assembly she was Deputy Chair of the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee and also a member of the Learning and Education Committee. She is party spokesperson on Human Rights

☞ **Maoliosa Boyle, Women's Centre**

The Women's Centre seeks to promote equality of access for women by providing resources so that women can meet, learn, and support each other to make choices and develop common strategies for the empowerment of women. Maoliosa is the artist in residence at the centre and for her dissertation researched the benefits of public art. She has worked within the centre to design a program of visual art access for minority women who have had no previous experience or qualifications in visual art, helping them to gain a qualification and build up a portfolio. Maoliosa currently teaches at the centre, and at Magee College, while also continuing with her own art work.

☞ **Roisin Barton and Ann , Bogside and Brandywell Women's Group**

Women in the Bogside and Brandywell area have largely borne the effects of the endemic levels of poverty, unemployment, deprivation and conflict associated with the area. Women have

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suffered as a result of the absence of social amenities and childcare facilities locally. Women's unemployment and poverty, broken marriages, teenage pregnancies, lone parent families, domestic violence and social isolation are all features associated with the lives of women in this area. The daily experience of unpaid work such as child minding and managing homes on a shoestring budgets, often in total isolation, is the unseen reality of many women's lives. It was the recognition of the extent of these combined problems and the vacuum which exists regarding the promotion of women's issues, which led to the formation of the Bogside and Brandywell Women's Group in 1994. It is a voluntary organization with women from diverse backgrounds and experience, ranging from teachers and students to those who have been involved in community development work for many years. The Women's Group have to date been instrumental in the creation of many projects aiming to alleviate this situation. For example, they have recently launched a series of courses to women of all ages enabling them to extend their skills and return to the labour market.

☞ **Michael Lynch, Men's Action Network**

The Men's Action Network (MAN) seeks to provide a safe space for men to find support and to explore, voice, and gain insight with the many life issues that they are experiencing. They hope to address the isolation men feel, isolation that may in times of crisis lead to more serious life consequences like addiction, depression, or even suicide. MAN follows an ethos of prevention that underpins the development of holistic interventions, recognizing and supporting men's emotional, physical, mental and social life experiences.

In addition to the formal interviews I had countless conversations and informal interactions with many amazing women who provided me invaluable stories, viewpoints, and understanding. I found the interview process to be extremely interesting and it provided me a lot of information about myself and my own part in this field study process. As Cora pointed out to me in our final meeting, even the choice of individuals who I included and whose voices I did not seek out informed the picture of peace that I was developing. It was important for me to remain aware of my role in this process and how as a researcher, the choices I made affected the outcome. The people I spoke with were not the acclaimed

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peace builders who were constantly in the media or winning awards for their peace building efforts. This fact alone said a lot about what I thought peace was, and who I saw contributing to it. While I do value and appreciate the work of politicians and the highly publicized individuals out there, I see peace building as a slow moving process working with people and relationships and not with papers and treaties. Perhaps it was simply because of the type of people I spoke with, but it seemed to me that many others shared my conception of the ways that peace could successfully be achieved.

In the beginning of the interviewing, I was extremely nervous and I found myself tiptoeing around touchy topics for fear of offending or asking riské questions. However as I became more comfortable with the process, I found that I was more willing to put myself on the line and truly question. I was able to fine tune my questions as the process went on to determine which were most effective in garnering informative answers. In the beginning I was asking broad based vague questions about community development² and I was trying to independently bridge this to peace building. However I quickly refocused my energies towards peace building - the topic I had set out to study. This was a much more beneficial approach for me and after the interviews I was more satisfied with my data.

After the first un-taped interview I decided to purchase a dictator machine to help me in properly ingesting and processing my data. I soon found however that the recorder was both a blessing and a curse. It truly did pose an interruption to the flow of the interview and while I wasn't frantically writing, trying to catch up with the interviewee, the recorder sitting on the table definitely intruded upon the dynamic. I also found myself getting anxious about whether or not the tape was actually working, and since I couldn't hear when the tape had finished, I had to continuously check it. Overall, I think that having the tapes was helpful because reviewing the taped interviews enabled me to pick up on information and key points that I had missed the first time around. And in retrospect all of my

² Now don't get me wrong, I am extremely interested in community development and I also see a very strong connection between building up the community and building up a sustainable peace.

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interviews were much more informative than I had thought leaving them, so I felt better knowing I had not wasted my valuable time and opportunities with such great people.

Because of time constraints I was unable to transcribe all of my interviews prior to writing up this project. For reference I therefore relied on the field notes I had taken and the recorded tapes. I am currently still working on the transcriptions and I am hopeful that the laborious efforts will pay off and they will prove to be useful sources for future reference.

Observations

Some of the greatest opportunities in life come from being in the right place at the right time, and field work in Derry was proof positive. After a day or so in the city, I was getting frustrated with the absence of people for Easter holiday. I was just starting to panic about not being able to contact people; to be perfectly honest I was beginning to worry that I would speak to no one and have nothing to work with for my project. Near tears in the library³, I ran into Andrea who informed me that there was a planning meeting to organize the protest for President Bush’s visit to Ireland, and one of the featured speakers was going to be Bernadette (Devlin) McAliskey - one of my “reach” contacts. This wonderful opportunity was just handed to me and I was thrilled to see my luck turning around.

Attending the meeting was an extremely valuable experience and gave me a glimpse of the way that individuals interact and work together in community work. It was also an eye-opening, unusual experience for me to sit in a meeting of people who were bashing Americans left and right for reasons with which I could not disagree. And while some people knew that we were Americans, for the most part, we were hearing unabashed, uncensored opinions of America.

I was surprisingly nervous about meeting Bernadette, to the point that I was physically trembling when I approached her after the meeting. I had debated the appropriateness of contacting her in this

³ The public library was a very helpful source of information for me and many of the other SIT students in Derry. It contains volumes of newspaper clippings, pamphlets, and magazines, as well as wonderful human resources who were eager to speak to us and provide assistance in whatever way possible.

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setting to ask her a favor for my research. A large part of me was still feeling slightly uncertain as to why anyone would want to waste their time talking to me, and I didn't want to be like a stalker intruding on Bernadette's personal life. I think I was also slightly concerned that she would just tell me to talk to her right there and then, when I was completely unprepared and hadn't had a chance to review my questions with Cora. It seemed strange to me how star struck I was. In the states we don't have access to such public figures and this is truly such a small country. Here in Derry, individuals could be both celebrities and average Joes at the same time. While every day I passed a house sized mural of Bernadette, here she was in a room full of ordinary people just making plans. Bernadette was absolutely lovely and immediately gave me her email and told me to contact her. And after I emailed her she responded very quickly and seemed very willing to talk; however, because of the time constraints and because she lives outside of Derry, we were not able to meet. However I have emailed my questions to Bernadette and I am currently waiting for the responses that I am quite hopeful will provide me interesting insights and information for further research.

I was also provided a wonderful unplanned opportunity when I went to see Jeanette Warke at the Fountain Cathedral Youth Club. I went to visit with her to confirm our appointment for the interview and to clarify my intentions. When I arrived, things were crazy and hectic and I asked her if she needed any help, eager for the chance to give back to the people that I was asking so much from. Jeanette seemed to assume I was asking if she needed any long term help and right then and there I became a volunteer at the youth club. I absolutely adore working with children and so it was a nice change of pace for me to step back from the academics and just hang out with the kids. I was also able to learn so much just by observing them, listening to them, talking them, and simply trekking into the Fountain every day.

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CONTENT AND ANALYSIS

Shared Experience

As its nickname suggests, “the Maiden City”, Derry is a very special place when it comes to the role of women there. In a short and sweet description, Mary Nelis says it best: “The Derry of my childhood was a place of women, strong, wonderful women.”⁴ While the origin of this nickname is sometimes contested, one explanation claims that it refers to the fact that historically Derry’s main industry was shirt-making, a traditionally female field. Because of this the women were the main breadwinners in most families, while the men stayed home, fed the babies and walked the dogs. So from the outset, Derry’s history suggests that women there have always held a unique place in a rather unconventional society. It was my understanding however that rather than a city of reversed gender roles, “The textile industries always employed women, who would then come home and take over the work of the house. For years they’ve been balancing work and family, and making ends meet.”⁵

A collective memory or sense of shared experience is a powerful means of bonding individuals. I was very curious to uncover whether experience in Derry was shaped strictly along sectarian lines or if connections had been made to bridge the political-religious divide. As Virginia Woolf mused, “As a woman, I have no country. As a woman, I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world.”⁶ Woolf suggests a stronger allegiance to womankind than to her nation and I was curious to see if this existed to any extent in Derry as well. When asking about a sense of shared experience in Derry, I intentionally left the question open to see if the responses would detail the collective memory of a single identity community or if there would be cross-community women’s bonds as well. For the most part, people discussed sharing only among their own exclusive communities; however I was able to pick up on patterns and the countless commonalities that spanned the two groups. The Derry shirt industry and the

⁴ “Real Change Still Beckons,” Mary Nelis. In *Unfinished Revolution*. Belfast: Meadhb Publishing. 1989. pg. 3.

⁵ Interview with Roisin and Ann

⁶ Woolf, Virginia. *Three Guineas*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 1966. Pg. 113.

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hard working women, from all backgrounds, that kept it running, were a huge piece of a history that was shared.

Also contributing to a sense of solidarity was women’s experiences throughout the troubles. I must confess that entering the project, I expected to find some sense of shared experience among women who had suffered similar hardship and losses over thirty years of the troubles. While relationships and connections are difficult to explain, Roisin and Ann perfectly articulated the way that communities develop and strengthen their bonds. “When you go through something like that together, you come through stronger.” Even in the smaller microcosm of a group situation, like freshman in college or our group in SIT, it is apparent that the process of going through an experience together, sharing memories, facing and overcoming challenges with one another creates an irrefutable bond.

It was in the hopes of creating such a connection around the horrors of the troubles that the “We Too Have Suffered” group was formed. Our SIT group had originally met them on our initial visit to Derry, and that was when I was first introduced to Jeanette Warke, the wonder-woman behind it all. The group consists of 12 women, 6 Protestant and 6 Catholic, that come together to share their stories from the troubles and discuss their losses in the hopes of finding some sort of healing and relationships from which to move forward. The DUP Deputy Mayor Mildred Garfield told a newspaper reporter, “For many years, the traumatic and devastating experiences of women in Northern Ireland have been swept under the carpet. I think it is important that women are given a forum through which they can talk about their experiences and meet with others who have similar stories to tell. This is an important part of the healing process and I am delighted that women from both sides of the political and religious divides are working together.”⁷

The group is truly a remarkable group of women, and I was fortunate enough to hear firsthand from a member about the transformation that they had taken. Joy described how difficult a process it

⁷ “Someone to talk to if you too have suffered,” Ian Starrett. IC Northern Ireland Online Newsletter. March 19, 2004.

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has been, and in fact she said that she dreads each and every meeting of the group. Despite how challenging and trying it was, Joy has now come to a place where she can sympathize with the other women’s losses and she sees that “a mother is a mother. If my son was hurt or involved, I would have done the same thing that she did.” As Joy expressed in a short essay she wrote about the group, “it slowly began to dawn on me that she was just a wife and a mother like myself.” Furthermore, the group is putting together a video, cd-rom, and booklet to “demonstrate to others how Protestant and Catholic women can realize that we have shared experiences and feelings, and that ‘they’ are in fact just the same as ‘us’.”⁸ The honesty and bravery of these women is truly heroic.

“A mother is a mother,” Joy said. Jeanette expressed similar feelings. “Take the queen too for instance, I mean look at the hassles she’s had in rearing her family. And at the end of the day she’s a mother. You know, without all the crown and all the trappings of royalty, that woman inside is a mother who feels for her children. People often forget that when they say hurtful things you know. Mary McAleese is the same I mean, she’s a woman, you know and president of the South of Ireland and I just think she’s brilliant.” Few people will deny the special bond that exists between a mother and child; however, I had not expected such strong mother to mother connections. It was quite clear, from comments such as these, that motherhood was an important part of these women’s identities. More importantly to peace building, I felt that this could be a crucial jumping point from which empathy and understanding could be reached.

“ ‘Mother’ got drafted into propaganda service over and over, in all warring nations” encouraging men to “offer up their young lives, if need be for Mother (Country) and Mum.”⁹ So how is it that all these women see their motherhood as a common bond that plants the seeds of peace? As Ellen Goodman sees it, “for whatever reasons – because of our culture, because of our history, or

⁸ “Towards Understanding (‘Them’ and ‘Us’).” Joy Smyth.

⁹ Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Women and War*. Sussex: The Harvester Press. 1987. Pg. 192.

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because of our motherhood – nonviolent convictions are more pervasive among women.”¹⁰ I see women’s great advantage in peace building in their ability to see similarities across lines, and the ability to see that we’re all just human beings. A lot of this can be attributed to the fact that women are often defined through their role as mothers, giving mothers worldwide a way to relate and connect. The fact that two women are mothers gives them a shared identity and an understanding to a certain extent of the way the other relates to the world. They have gone through similar experiences, and faced similar hopes, challenges, and fears. Two men involved in the conflict, who might be more likely to define themselves by their professions than their roles in their families, would have a much harder time in achieving this common ground. The reality is that much difference would exist between the experiences of for instance, a Protestant policeman and a Catholic builder. But a Protestant mother, a Catholic mother, British mother, Irish mother, Hindu mother, Swahili mother are all quite similar.

Images and Expectations Placed on Women

The ways that people define themselves says a lot about their priorities and how they see their place in society. “For centuries, women have been defined by the men in their lives: a father’s daughter, a son’s mother, a husband’s wife.”¹¹ The fact that women are so quick to define themselves around their role as mothers only attests to the strong morals and expectations that have been imposed on women in Ireland. The maternal connection is a beautiful thing when it is respected and cherished, however when motherhood is used against women, to coerce them, oppress them, control them, or to stigmatize those women who do not follow the societal norms, it can become an onerous burden. The film “Mother Ireland” explores the way that Ireland has been portrayed for centuries as a mother and simultaneously as weak, helpless, and oppressed, in need of her sons to go out and protect her. This sends a powerful message to women and in Bernadette McAliskey’s words, to a certain extent “tells women what they

¹⁰ Ellen Goodman, Washington Post, 22 May 1982. in Elshtain. Pg 231.

¹¹ Avril in Interview with Women into Irish History

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should be.”¹² Similarly, the imagery around Derry conveys the message of male superiority. “Derry, ... was historically named by men: ‘The Maiden City’ to denote the fact that the City, though besieged, had never been taken in battle. The imagery construed by the name represents an ideology of male domination of women. The City is a virgin, who though inviting rape (in battle), has never been penetrated (taken).”¹³

In addition to nationalistic imagery, religion provides strong morals and models of how women should behave. Stephanie and Immelda Peppard describe in “Mother Ireland” the way that in the post famine years, the Virgin Mary served as the most effective role model for women – a passive, subservient, woman who had lost her son for the cause. As a visual artist, Maoliosa Boyle, focuses a lot on imagery and the way that ideas are expressed or concepts passed on. Her work deals with the images that inform women’s identities. In particular the way that the two main female archetypal figures in Catholicism, the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, have been portrayed and have impacted the female psyche in Ireland. Her photography exhibit explored the insidious practice of the

“Magdalene laundries and this whole image of Mary Magdalene set against the virgin Mary. The reason that the Magdalene laundries were called the Magdalene laundries was because they were named after Mary Magdalene, who was seen as the penitent whore, who washed Jesus’s feet for her penance. So these institutions were set up for fallen women, and fallen being a term that was given loosely to women who had children outside of marriage, who were seen as kind of wayward or didn’t fit into society.”¹⁴ The very name of the institution hints at the way the image of Mary Magdalene, the prototypal “bad woman” or social misfit, was used to stigmatize those women that were not living in the image of the good Virgin Mother.

Not all of the women I spoke to felt the pressure to live up to the holy religious expectations. Roisin and Ann, for instance, didn’t feel the impact of those images. As they said, “I don’t know any Virgin Marys.” They felt that the role of motherhood was less tied to the religious imagery as people

¹² Bernadette McAliskey in “Mother Ireland” film.

¹³ Nelis. 1989. pg. 3.

¹⁴ Interview with Maoliosa Boyle

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now keep their beliefs apart from their community life. Still however, they strongly expressed a common portrayal of motherhood and how it has informed women’s identities in the past. They saw it more as a historical role from which they were moving beyond. When I asked them to elaborate on the image they were trying to get away from, they both laughed and said in unison “barefoot, pregnant, and tied to the kitchen sink.”

The expectations of motherhood as Roisin and Ann articulated, most definitely extend beyond religion and Catholicism. And this was made clear by the fact that it was not only the Catholic women who felt such a strong obligation to motherhood. Women from both communities felt the duty of motherhood was heavily imposed on them. They were taught as children that “their place was in the home and they had to produce babies, especially male ones.”¹⁵ This most likely stems from the idea that it is women’s responsibility to provide the Church, the Nation, the Cause, whatever the body politic may be, with more followers.

The overrepresentation of women as mothers and the virtual lack of any other portrayals purvey the sense that mothering is the only option for women. Holding up childbearing as women’s sole and most valued contribution to society serves to devalue the other gifts and talents that women can provide and also makes a failure out of those women who choose not to follow that life path. One of the women prisoners that Lorraine Dowler interviewed described her experience in jail:

“They also look at us differently than the other women. First off we weren’t having wee ones which is what we were supposed to be doing. I think if my husband could have got me pregnant in jail he would have because that was what he was supposed to be doing.”¹⁶

To a large extent though, this prioritization of motherhood has been internalized by the women. Many women feel that mothering and caring for the home is in fact the only thing that they are capable of, and confidence building was one of the main issues being addressed in most of the women’s

¹⁵ Avril in Interview with Women into Irish History

¹⁶ Maureen in “Women and War in Belfast”.Dowler, Lorraine. Gender, Place and Culture, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 159-176, 1998.

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agencies. Joanna Walker described her experiences with many of the women in making the transition to public life. The women can only become effective

“When they lose that lack of confidence. Because when they’re coming out of the family home and maybe they’ve been caring for a child for five years and they haven’t had been outside, their confidence is just not there. They don’t think they can do it anymore. They think that the only thing that they’re good at is the child care. And also I think it’s important that they’re actually empowered to know how much how good they’re doing at the job of bringing up a child and running a home and the importance of that. And how hard a job it actually is to do and all that multitask and doing everything at the one time and holding the family together. I think that’s important because that makes them feel then yes I do something of worth and it’s not only in the home. I think it’s important to make sure they know how to transfer the skills out from the home and then come out.”

To a certain extent, the work of the community development sector is in essence an extension of the work of the home. By classifying neighborhood, community, and city as one’s domain, the work of the women to better their environment and city becomes “keeping home” within the larger realm. In almost the same breath, Catherine Cooke lumped together the work of maintaining the family with that of the community. “A lot of women kept families going when the men were in jail. They kept community development alive and tried to create a sense of normalcy for their children,” she said. For many women the main motivation, or perhaps the most socially valued one, behind their involvement in community work is to better the world for their children. Jeanette Warke told me from her own personal experience and from the work she’s done with hundreds of women from both communities how,

“women as well want the best for their kids. They don’t want them to be living through what they lived through, and dealing with all that hurt. But they want, I mean, personally, I always wanted the best for my kids, and you will do anything to achieve that. And I think as well that we want to open up more what’s out there for young people. Not keep them in a closed environment where they don’t know what’s happening with their other neighbors. So it’s important that they move forward that way.”

The idea that a mother will do anything for her children, the “sacrificial mother” of sorts, is a concept that has transcended time and to a large part has become integrated with many women’s own

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personal beliefs and psyche. It is a pretty romanticized notion that seemingly stems from evolutionary drives to protect and nurture offspring. The duty and obligation, however noble they might be, become detrimental when they demand that women lose themselves and give up their own goals, desires, and needs, for others. The first few times that the sacrificial mother reared her head in my research, I hardly even took notice; it can be especially hard to detect anti-feminist beliefs or practice when it's coming from women themselves. The notion that women are willing to lay down and die for the sake of their children has been used to manipulate women, manipulate the ideas of what is good for women, and even manipulate the very idea of what women are. Mrs. John Hume, upon receiving an honor for her hard work was quoted as saying that “while she was widely regarded as having played a key role in her husband's many achievements, she personally felt she ‘hadn't sacrificed that much.’ ‘Anything I did I enjoyed’ she said.”¹⁷ Linking the sacrifice to her own personal enjoyment, Mrs. Hume drove the point home how internalized these expectations are. How successful has society been in encouraging these views of women, when women themselves have come to believe that they truly would rather do for others than for themselves?

Doing solely for others to a certain extent equates to the modern practice of volunteerism. It is often times the women, who are willing to do work for the betterment of the community with no compensation. In fact Catherine Cooke predicted that as the peace money begins to run out, and the paying jobs are terminated, it will most likely be the women that return to the forefront of the community sector to pick up the work. Reflecting on the way that women are seemingly more willing to volunteer, it occurred to me that here was the sacrificial mother one more time. She is willing to give up her own personal success and achievement for the good of the community and do the work for nothing. Cora referred to this concept as the theology of failure. In essence, Christ died on the cross, as a failure, and this image has since been glorified as the epitome of holiness and goodness. By extension one gets

¹⁷ Derry Journal April 23, 2004. pg 2. Section One.

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the idea that he is only good if he is making a sacrifice for others and failing. Therefore volunteering to a certain degree requires the worker to sacrifice their own compensation or personal success in order to be considered “good” or holy.

Invisible Woman

*Moving through history,
You disappear leaving no footprint.
When your voice called out through the ages,
They covered you with their sex.
We claim you now,
With our white roses and our red.
~ Alice McCartney~*

While women have traditionally been forced to sacrifice a lot for their families and for the sake of modesty or goodness, in my eyes, one of the saddest things that has been taken from women is their recognition. Much of women’s work goes remarkably unnoticed and winds up omitted from the history books and the records. Women were referred to on more than one occasion as “the backbone of the community” and yet to read a book or hear accounts of the troubles, you would think that women were completely absent from the society. Even the Women into Irish History class that I observed was focusing their entire syllabus on the “founding fathers.” When I inquired of the professor why historical women did not have a more prominent place in their class, he told me that “there was a limited scope of women in history.” It took all of my willpower not to scream out that this was exactly the problem that I thought the group was addressing, but who was I to impose my beliefs on their class.

Pat Murphy the filmmaker who created, “Anne Devlin” cites this relative dearth of historical women as her main motivation behind the movie. Women are working behind the scenes all the time but this work is being devalued by its lack of acknowledgement. As she says, Countess Markoviecz, is portrayed as a strong women role model, however she is seen as exceptional, and out of the ordinary. In reality, wonderful brave women are working for the good of the nation all the time. Pat therefore

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chose Anne Devlin as her heroine to remind the world that there are plenty of good women role models that have made great contributions but have been virtually forgotten.

In more modern times, Joanna Walker described the way a group of women with whom she was working became extremely discouraged and disenchanted by their invisibility.

“In some ways that’s the male dominance within the community. The community organizations put them [the women] down. You know that’s what happened in this group, ... the community organization in which they were working had taken ownership of all their courses and ...all that that the women had went and done. They [the programs] did come from the center but it was the women’s groups that actually initiated the whole thing and they were involved in the women’s group and it was the women’s group [that] empowered them to go and do it. But the center is taking ownership. It’s about them [the women] regaining their own control again. About them getting their own power back within them.”

Not only did the community group stealing the women’s thunder deprive the women of their recognition and credit, it discouraged all women from further involvement and set back the progress that they had made in taking a stand and voicing their opinions. As Mrs. Jordan said, “there is little women can do in the city because it seems to be dominated by males. Where can you go to voice your opinions?”

Women’s voices, concerns, and perspectives have been ignored for so long and to a large extent, many of the women’s groups and organizations today are working to right those wrongs. The Derry Well Woman Center was born out of this need to address women’s health. Throughout the troubles, there were no health services for women whatsoever let alone psychological services. In the place of counseling and spaces for women to open up and voice their opinions and experiences, were prescriptions for valium and aphorisms like “You made up your bed, now sleep in it” and “Take your oil” encouraging women to toughen it up and deal with their situations.¹⁸ It is now more widely acknowledged that women have unique needs and issues especially coming out of thirty years of violent conflict tearing their homes apart. And it is crucially important that these are addressed rather than

¹⁸ Interview with Monica Doherty, Deidre O’Hara, and Mary Gill

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swept under the carpet. In a similar manner, “the Bogside and Brandywell Women’s Group gives women a voice. A lot of people identify with them”¹⁹ and because of that the women feel that they are finally being seen as important members of society, worthy of attention and care.

Mary Nelis, a more prominent figure with whom many of the Bogside and Brandywell women identify²⁰, provided me an insider’s glimpse of the way that males dominate both politics and the media, leaving little room for women’s voices or issues to be heard. Immediately following my interview with her, Mary had another appointment with a reporter who had the nerve to tell her that he was only “coming to interview [her] because [he] couldn’t get any of the men.”²¹ (ie Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness, Mitchell McLaughlin). I was appalled at his lack of tact and the fact that Mary’s experienced and well respected opinion would be less desirable or less credible because she was a woman. She described the anti-woman atmosphere that pervades the assembly: the hours that the assembly runs, not conducive to women’s lifestyles and family responsibilities, the gun room that stands in the basement to guard the weapons of councilors and the absence of a crèche to guard their children. Mary told me horror stories of the ways that the women in the assembly were harassed and were subject to abusive behavior from the men when they even tried to speak about women’s issues.²²

Another key aspect of women’s invisibility comes from the few key women who are visible and who stand to represent and speak for women worldwide. A careful analysis of these women reveals the way that society views women and the spaces in which women are actually welcome. Women like Margaret Thatcher, Eleanor Roosevelt, Countess Markovicz stand in stark contrast with the image of the good Virgin Mary; they are extremely masculinized women who have had to shed their feminine qualities to succeed. The other women figures worthy of public attention are the Martha Stewarts or perfect home makers who fit back into the Virgin Mary category. These two groupings of visible women

¹⁹ Interview with Roisin and Ann

²⁰ According to the accounts of Roisin and Ann

²¹ Interview with Mary Nelis

²² Ibid.

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send the message that the options for women include overly feminine mothering roles, or completely masculine positions. There is relatively no space for successful, feminine women. Mary Nelis told me about Laura Flanders’ book, *Bushwoman*, which details the women of the Bush administration and the way that those “women have had to adopt men’s clothing” and toe their party lines in order to succeed. She explained how the women gradually have had to go along with the male politics as they’ve advanced, and were deprived of the space to raise the women’s issues or agendas that they had previously endorsed. As Mary said, “why should we let anybody dictate to us how we should dress, how we should act, how we should feel? We need to be ourselves?” But then I guess the question is, who exactly are we?

Feminine vs. Female

Many contentious topics were raised as I attempted to navigate the harsh terrain of gender roles and where women belong. In a society where social norms and traditional roles are being questioned all the time, it’s no small wonder that all things female, feminine, and feminist have become inextricably jumbled jargon. Coming from an American background, I must also add that I have very different views and expectations of gender roles, women’s liberation, and societal limitations. I have yet to be constrained by my gender in any setting and I have been taught that women can do or be anything they want. Wilhelm Hutton, the former editor of the *London Observer* commented in a lecture at Trinity College that European women are about 10-20 years behind American women in terms of the feminist movement, if not a full generation behind.²³ So it was important for me to keep this cultural difference in mind throughout the course of my discussions.

One of the main questions that I hoped to explore in Derry was whether or not people are really referring to masculine and feminine characteristics when they discuss things in terms of male and female. In reality it brings us back to the intricacies of language and the importance of establishing clear definitions in reference to particularly ambiguous or vague concepts. In this regard, are there inherent

²³ This information was conveyed to me by Cora Bruemmer, an attendee at the lecture.

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differences between men and women? What exactly does it mean to be male or female? Are there generalized characteristics or traits that can be designated as either masculine or feminine? Or even within each of us, are there separate masculine and feminine sides? And if so, what are they, and who decides which is what?

While there are those that would say that women make better peace makers than men, there are plenty of men who are successful peace makers and who seem to be more in touch with their feminine sides. And inversely there are plenty of women who are just as involved in violence and sectarianism as men and are not inclined in the least towards peace. Speaking with Michael Lynch, of the Man’s Action Network, I felt that I could have been listening to the manifesto of a female support group. His group works to create an environment and space where men can discuss and work through their life issues and promote emotional health and wellbeing for men. All of the activities that he was describing were the very things that had been attributed to making women better peace builders. So if talking and expressing emotion is the key to successful peace building, and these men are doing it, wouldn’t these men be as good of peacemakers as the women? Is it because they are tapping into their feminine side?

By the same right we can not say that all women fit into the typical or stereotypical female roles in society. There are several prominent women who have been able to succeed in a predominantly men’s world. Someone like Margaret Thatcher for instance is often called the “grossest daughter” in that she was a war monger and did not show compassion towards the plight of the Catholics in Northern Ireland. In cases such as this, where women do step out of the gender roles that tradition has permitted them, it is often thought that women become more extreme than men. Perhaps to a certain extent, these women feel that they must be tough and stone hearted to show that they’re not soft or weak; they must prove themselves worthy of their roles or power - they can do it just like a man can. Michael Lynch called this “women outmen-ing men.”

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But even this easily identifiable behavior is too complex for a simple write off. Is this in fact the case of women embellishing their masculine side to fit in with their male colleagues? Or perhaps do the more competitive controlling domineering traits exist in women but have been more repressed as socially unacceptable, and therefore not often expressed? “Why is it that when a man is forceful and strong that’s terrific, but when a woman is she’s being bitchy? And it’s considered a bad thing? She’s not being masculine if she’s being strong; she’s just being a woman!”²⁴ Avril became quite offended at my suggestion that women were acting like men to succeed. However when I responded and asked whether or not she thought that men and women have different strengths she agreed and said that in fact yes, it was clichéd but men and women are equal but different and “they say we use different sides of our brains and look at problems differently.”

Along with the women who act more “masculine” than most, are the women who are not opposed to violence and do not believe that we should all talk, express ourselves, and make peace. Those very women who proclaim that, “I am not a pacifist.”²⁵ Hearing those words out of Bernadette McAliskey’s mouth, I couldn’t help but think that she had just provided the perfect counter argument to my project. Here was a woman, who was a mother, who had been through it all - all the troubles, all the battles for the sake of her family, and basically all of the experiences that had led other women to say that they advocated for peace. And yet Bernadette said outright that she had no qualms about the fact that she was a proponent of violence and fighting for what you wanted. Perhaps she is more in tune with her masculine side, or perhaps, as is suggested in the Mother Ireland film, there is a strong connection between the struggle of women and the struggle of nations to break free from their oppression. As Bernadette said during the movie, there is a certain awareness of women of all the different levels of oppression and the fact that no matter what the cause, you “won’t have rights unless you organize and fight for them.” Furthermore what exactly is pacifism and is it required of peace

²⁴ Avril in Interviews with Women into Irish History

²⁵ Bernadette McAliskey at the Organizing meeting for Bush protest

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building? Bernadette was one of the only individuals identified as being peace builders, and yet here she was proclaiming that she is not a pacifist. Is it possible that to attain the type of sustainable positive peace that was identified as the goal of effective peace building that negative peace must be breached? And so perhaps Bernadette, a female who advocates for struggle and resistance is not less feminine at all, but rather is a female with a different approach to achieving peace?

Strengths of Women and their Impact on Family and Community

Political correctness and saying what’s “right” often get in the way of saying what you truly believe. Many people were apprehensive to discuss the differences between men and women, and didn’t want to be classed as sexist by suggesting that there were unique qualities that either men or women alone possessed. However, after much prodding, I was able to amass to a certain extent characteristics or traits that in general would give women an advantage in building a peace and developing their communities.

Women are considered to be more patient and understanding and more willing to express their emotions and listen to and respect others. Despite the clichés Eamonn Deane considered women to be “more in touch with their emotional life” and in turn “more honest, clear, sympathetic, empathetic, and understanding in their ability to tell their stories.” Additionally, he felt that women have the “ability to ‘gentle’ people out of violence,” in particular young females in their influence on young males. To explain this creative verb usage he elaborated, “if you have a group of young males, together they have no language of their emotional life other than fuck. However when the grace of a young woman is introduced, even if she is violent herself, her presence will gentle the males and introduce a whole new language beyond fuck”²⁶ Similarly, many individuals recounted stories of their mothers guarding sons like hawks to keep them out of the troubles. Some even went so far as to slip their sons valium which served to calm them and keep them somewhat pacified.

²⁶ Interview with Eamonn Deane

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Women are seen as natural problem solvers who “before 9am have already solved so many problems in just getting the kids out of the house and ready for school. They spend their lives compromising and it therefore comes naturally to them.”²⁷ Perhaps one of the contributing factors to the natural problem solving skills is that fact that most people seem to believe that women have a broader view and can consider the whole picture when observing a situation.

Another huge strength that not only did people discuss but I was able to observe first hand was the practicality and needs based approach that women take. As Mrs. Jordan suggested, “Women would be more able in the council. ... They would look around at the city and see the graffiti and rubbish and get the winos off the walls instead of fighting amongst themselves about names” The Well Woman women, the Bogside Brandywell Women’s Group women, and Mary Nelis in her discussion of the Relative’s Action Committee also described the way their individual organizations were established because of a need in the community that the women saw and decided to take action about. Even Joanna Walker in her work with multiple women’s groups explained that the way she decided to tackle her job was to step back first and observe what was going on. “It’s very much a team effort that we’d all work together to get and I’d say that’s very strong in the women’s sector. They’re not fighting against each other to do. It’s not competitive. As I said when I started the job there’s no point thinking I’d reinvent the wheel and think I’m going to do all different things, my first thing was to find out what’s out there for women and then let’s build on that and let’s build a partnership together,”²⁸ she said.

In terms of my own observations, I was fortunate to be able to witness women in action in several different settings. The first was the planning meeting in which I heard Bernadette McAliskey speak. Now it could have just been my overanalyzing but it seemed to me that the men in the meeting, namely the other three speakers on the panel as well as a few key audience members, were intent on spouting off a lot of rhetoric and using emphatic colorful language and emotional speech to arouse the

²⁷ Interview with Roisin and Ann

²⁸ Interview with Joanna Walker

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crowd. However, beyond their preaching to the choir, it did not seem to me that they were actually saying anything productive about ways to move their cause forward. Conversely, when Bernadette spoke, while I have no doubt that she is as powerful a speaker as any of her male colleagues, she did not waste her time inciting feelings that already existed. Instead she said outright, this is the problem, what're we going to do about it? And she proceeded to make concrete suggestions as to practical ways that the group could effectively channel their energies and make their point.

Jeanette Warke was another woman whose courage under fire and whose ability to tackle problems head on astounded me. When I arrived at the Cathedral Youth Club to speak with Jeanette she was playing the busy bee getting the club ready for the impending visit of Mary McAleese, president of Ireland. Within minutes she had handed me a rag and some windex and had me jumping right on board with what needed to get done. I was fortunate enough to have shadowed Jeanette through several different settings and in each one she was able to gracefully manage the business of the day, even when it consisted of six phone calls coming in, three needy children requesting candy or jumpers or directions, five emails to respond to, four things to pick up, and twelve rooms that needed to be dusted and hovered. Her ability to go about each task, sometimes managing three at once, all with a smile on her face truly attests better than any person's mere declaration to the skill that women have in addressing the real needs and multi-tasking.

As the predominant presence in the homes, and the “backbones of the community,” women have a huge impact upon their families and their communities at large. Nearly everyone I spoke with in some way or another mentioned that peace and community development works like a ripple in the pond, gradually spreading out in larger and larger circles from where the stone was thrown. Deidre and Monica from Well Woman claim that “if we're happy we can help them [their families and friends]. It sounds bad but it's natural that if you're happy, it passes on to the people around you, it can make them happy too.” At the same time, women “pass on to their daughters or sons what [they] learn.”

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Maoliosa describes how the happiness, confidence, and women friendly values can subconsciously be transmitted. The women, “bring their children in and they’re well looked after in the crèche and the children here are kind of surrounded by a certain ethos and range of kind of beliefs that we would hold up here. So they’re kind of surrounded by that the whole time that they’re within the crèche so I’m sure that effects them in terms that there’s another generation growing up there as well.”

Roisin and Ann agreed, “if we can do it for the women, we can do it for their families” they said. “It’s a domino effect. When a girl successfully completes a course, she’ll go home and tell her friends about it and then we’ll get three or four more enrolled next year.” One of the most positive things about empowering women is that it only encourages them to empower more. Every woman and organization that I spoke with proudly acknowledged the way that their presence and positive results inspired others to step up and improve their own lives. And this example extends beyond just women. As the Well Women told me, they served as an example for the men’s movement and as they said, “we’ll help everyone. Even the local men’s group.”

It became clear to me that women had a lot to offer their communities and the peace building field. However, in the end, I think that Avril said it best when she remarked that there are differences between men and women giving them each different contributions to make to society. “The two viewpoints should come together. We should be working together to solve our problems” she said. I could not agree more. Whether it is because of inherent psychological or physiological traits or because of the nurtured societal roles and expectations, there are clear differences between men and women and the strengths they each bring to different situations. It would be ridiculous to say that it was possible to generalize and characterize either men or women in one particular way or to say that either group was inherently superior to the other. If only we could create a fair and balanced society where both masculine and feminine characteristics and capabilities were adequately valued for what they were and were allowed to work in conjunction with one another, we’d be a whole lot better off.

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CONCLUSIONS

Peace building – Who and How?

In the current stagnation of the peace process and the suspension of the Stormont assembly, there are many who would question the progress and success of the peace process in Northern Ireland. At this point in time, sectarian feelings still hold strong and paramilitary leaders still rule the roost. Despite all of this, I still think that there are those brave few in Northern Ireland, and in Derry in particular that are daring to go against the grain and are hard at work building up a just and sustainable peace for the country. During most of my interviews, I asked outright who was currently building peace in Northern Ireland, and the responses were quite telling. Depending upon the understanding of the question or of my expectations I received two main replies. The first came from those individuals who presumably thought I was looking for a political or prominent public figure, and their answer was generally “no one.” These individuals elaborated to tell me how the politicians are “all in it to line their own pockets. Nobody trusts them. And it’s not only the government here. It’s the same way in Dublin, and England and in Washington too.”²⁹ According to a group of women, the acclaimed peace builders are “all two faced and bigoted.”³⁰ These responses speak volumes on the disconnect between the politicians, the figures in power, and those on the ground. Clearly the masses have no faith in and do not support the actions of their so called leaders and it is no small wonder that today the peace process rests on such shaky ground.

The second reply was more encouraging and suggested that it was the community workers, youth workers, and people like Jeanette, who were working quietly, who were trying to bring the two sides together that were actually building peace. Furthermore, some people felt very strongly that there

²⁹ Interview with Joy

³⁰ Interview with Women into Irish History

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was “a slight difference between those who purport to be building peace and those who actually are.”³¹

This second category of peace builders are not in the limelight but rather are working on the ground in a slow and steady manner. While the hares are out huffing and puffing about the work that they are rushing into, signing treaties and community relations publicity campaigns, these workers are trudging along with the day to day efforts of creating real relationships and attacking the deeper issues that stand in the way of peace. “I would say in her own very kind of more quiet way in recent years. Bernadette does, she gets across her point very very strongly ... without shouting it out too much either.” Maoliosa Boyle said in describing the ways that Bernadette McAliskey works to build peace. The moral of this story was that the actual peace is being established by community workers who are more in tune with their populace and who work simply and quietly, no big hoopla involved.

Who truly knows how to build peace? Unfortunately I can't say that I was able to find the answers, but I do believe that there are those who are on to the right idea. And there are certainly some successful principles that must be maintained throughout. Eamonn maintains that peace building “is painstaking, unpredictable, and full of surprises.” But no matter how much work is done, he felt that “peacebuilding can not be measured. It consists of the people who [participate in programs and leave] radiating happiness and go back to their homes with it.” Roisin and Ann see similar developments in the women in their groups and the ways that the small pockets of peace begin small, but gradually expand. “By starting off in the local community, and instilling confidence and raising self esteem” peace can be achieved. “You must first build capacity because if we have confident and self reliant women, they can then go anywhere and meet with the other.” Peace beginning in the home and radiating to the larger community was also the key stone behind Michael Lynch's concept of peace, and how his men's movement is contributing to it. He told me, “it depends on what context of peace building you're referring to. We do it in the home setting.” To a certain extent I saw their campaign to improve

³¹ Interview with Michael Lynch

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relations between men and women and to develop a clearer understanding a parallel struggle to that between Catholics and Protestants. Once again the emphasis is on understanding the other and accepting their unique needs, strengths, and contributions.

“Peace building comes about one by one by one by one,” reflected Eamonn Deane, or as Maoliosa Boyle phrased it, “in small pockets.” Peace building comes in the hug between a Catholic and Protestant in Jeanette’s group. After weeks of hearing one another’s stories, they have finally learned to sympathize with and understand the other’s pain, even if they will never agree with their position. Peacebuilding comes with Maoliosa Boyle’s daughter attending integrated school and learning through her daily interactions that there is really no difference between Protestants and Catholics; “people are people and that is what’s important.” The way to mend a community divided is to make them one. To create connections, relations, and interdependence, upon the premise that there is far more that unites us than divides us. Whether we’re establishing a peace between men and women, young and old, Protestant and Catholic, we must learn to celebrate and honor difference. We must learn to appreciate the ways that we can learn from difference for the benefit of us all; everyone has different skills, lessons, perspectives to offer and together we can achieve myriads more than we can alone.

“The biggest role anybody can have in the peace building process is telling their story, allowing others to tell their story, and in empathizing,” Eamonn suggested. The concept is so simple, and yet so true. Without expressing ourselves and sharing with others our point of view, how do we ever expect them to know us? How else can we break down the myths and monsters and replace them with understanding and connections? Tell their story, listen to others – and there it was – the peace builders, the courageous individuals who take risks, stand up to years of segregation and misunderstanding and provide space for the voices. The people who allow the many hurting, yearning individuals to express themselves and who then allow those stories to cross the divide. One at a time they are painting clearer

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more accurate pictures of the other, changing them from a “them” to a “just like us” and eventually to an “us.”

Barriers to Peace

To put it on paper, it seems so easy. Just tell your story, listen, and respect – that’s not so hard. Why isn’t everyone building peace? But the fact of the matter is that peace is so simple, and yet so much more complex, and there are countless barriers that stand in the way. The first and most obvious barrier that I was able to observe was so physically prominent in Derry that it serves as an eyesore and dominates the whole Derry landscape: the peace walls. Ironic, isn’t it, the way that the peace walls do nothing but prevent peace. On one of my many trips across the divide, I passed a group of young boys inside the Fountain who were all playing football. Directly on the other side as if by mirror image, was another group of boys, this time outside the walls, doing the exact same thing. These boys should have been playing football together, and yet because of the walls, the separation, their games remain isolated. So called “peace walls” may contribute to the establishment or maintenance of a negative peace – the temporary absence of violence. But isn’t anyone concerned with creating a more sustainable positive peace? Wouldn’t it be better to achieve a peace in which relationships and communities can grow and thrive and aren’t stunted by a physical barrier? Walls are so divisive and further hatred, misunderstanding, and distance between people. It is very easy to hate the faceless “enemy” on the other side of the barrier, and in turn throw stones and “protect yourself” from him. But is it as simple to hate and inflict pain upon a mother with her child, or a ten year old boy? How can you try to understand someone if you can’t even see them eye to eye?

In describing the ways that the “We Too Have Suffered” group has grown, Joy maintained that the Catholics and Protestants in the group have become “friendlier now than at the start. But it still wouldn’t be that I could phone her if I needed a favor or something. Not like my other friends.” The idea of being able to phone a friend and how that contributes to relationships sparked a deeper

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understanding in me. Of course, I knew these things from my own personal life. Calling someone up, depending on them, creating an interdependence and trust, knowing they’ll be there. These are the basics behind good strong relationships; without these firm foundations, we just have acquaintances with whom we can chat at a party. Until there is a way for trust and interdependence to form across the communities, the work that is done will not progress below the surface. And as Joy said, ‘it’s probably better for it to be slow, rather than rush in and say you’re my best friend after two meetings and ignore all the underlying hurt and issues.’ However, until the two communities are forced to come together, forced to function as one, there will be no means of progression. As long as there is a Catholic school and a Protestant school, a Catholic pub and a Protestant pub, a Catholic shop and a Protestant shop, how are people ever supposed to interact on a real and meaningful basis and get to the point where they can phone friends across the divide and trust that they’ll be there.

Compounding the physical barriers are the fortified walls that many people have erected in their hearts. There is still much hurt, bitterness, and animosity that pervade the very beings of those involved. Even from the short conversations that I had with the many different individuals there were countless times when the clouds rolled in, the mood became tense, and it was almost as if the acrid sentiments were being directed at me. Until these feelings and hostilities are addressed, given room to heal, and picked apart and break down, it seems unlikely that any sort of relationships will be able to grow.

Women’s role that they have to play

Each and every woman with whom I interacted in Derry was remarkable, brave, strong, talented, and passionate beyond belief. I was completely floored with the amount of work that was being done and with the dedication and determination being poured into improving life for women and all of the people of Derry. I set out to explore the ways that women are involved in their communities and in the field of peace building and in the words of Mary Nelis, “I must take my hat off to women.” Not only was I amazed at the collective amount of work going on, but I could not get over how much each and

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every individual contributes. There are obviously no simple solutions, no magic paths leading straight to peace; however I think that each and every individual has a part to play, and I think that women in particular, as members of society that have not always been heard, have a lot to offer. Women must capitalize on their strengths: their wealth of local knowledge, their unique perspective, their problem solving skills, their patience, their caring, their empathy, their ability to tap into and discuss their emotions, and their remarkable impact on those around them. Women must participate in creating the peace that they hope to see not only in Derry but worldwide.

Women don't have all the answers, nor can they do it alone, but they must be involved in developing the institutions and systems that will effect their lives. And it is not just the masculinized, hardened women, nor just the deeply emotional feminine women. Each woman has a unique background, unique needs, and unique strengths, which must be an integral part of peace building. Whether it's mothers relating and establishing connections, oppressed women highlighting the many different levels of oppression that pervade society, whether it's empowered mothers demanding adequate child care so that they too can be involved, or emotional women sharing their stories, communicating, and changing the myths and hard feelings into understanding and empathy, women have a lot to offer the peace building process and I am truly honored to have witnessed the small bit in Derry.

Personal Conclusions

While doing my research, I was made much more aware of the way that I am perceived as an American, and even more so as a Jewish American. While in the States, I am surrounded by others just like me, I have been fortunate to have never faced discrimination or prejudice of any kind, and I can pretty much take my identity for granted as socially acceptable. Here, on the other hand, I am clearly a minority and my identity is often the source of at the very least a second glance and a comment or two. In certain situations, the fact that I am an American is celebrated and I'm received with great big smiles and silly questions like, “Wow, Americans in Derry! You're from New Jersey, do you know Bon Jovi?”

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At the same time I was surprised at the way that America is sometimes romanticized and idealized, even by those slightly more in tune with the ways of the world than the naïve, romantic teenagers. At the same time, there were situations, like the protest planning meeting where I was uncomfortable to open up my mouth and reveal who I was. Similarly, in a country where religion is everything, I often found myself dodging the question of which Church I belonged to. Now I am by no means ashamed of my background or any part of who I am, however there were definitely times when I did have concerns as to the way it would be received. At the same time, being surrounded by different culture and beliefs, I was able to distinguish the bits of Americanism in me that I'm proud of. The value placed on individualism, and freedom and the confidence of believing that everything is attainable and nothing can get in my way. Furthermore, the part of me that screams to stand up for what I believe is right, and to challenge the inequalities and injustices that I see. These are very things that make me proud to be an American and which rightly inform the idealized notions of life in America. Yet it took me traveling outside of it to be able to truly appreciate how instilled in me these values are.

On several occasions, the people who I thought were supposed to be providing answers, shot my questions right back at me, and asked me why I was here, or what I was doing. I think it was good for me to have to reflect upon my own reasoning and also it forced me to remember my place in the process. To a certain extent, I was an intruding upon these people's lives and it was only fair that I could answer to them. While I was in Derry to study, the people I was working with are not just there for me to research, these are people going about their lives. Furthermore, they might not want me poking around their business and emotions, giving them my textbook analysis. Being questioned definitely reinforced the importance of research ethics and also challenged my own sincerity. Why was I there? What was I doing? If I had to answer to more than just a project proposal, I had to be sure that I knew.

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I can not even begin to count the number of times that the topic of Israel and Palestine came up throughout my interactions in Derry. Particularly, once people heard that I was Jewish, many of them never having met a Jew before, they automatically assumed that I was somehow obligated to provide them with the quote unquote Jewish perspective. I found it quite ironic that I originally came to study in Northern Ireland because of its parallels to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the potential studies that it afforded me; and yet by the end of my stay I had to leave the table on several occasions because I just could not stomach the conversation any more. I found myself constantly defending my position, and simultaneously coming to terms with my own feelings while justifying them to others. My natural inclination is to support the oppressed who're fighting for civil rights and freedom, however in this case that “side” was telling me that I too was an oppressor in my support of Israel. In the case of both America and Israel, I had to explain the distinction that enabled me to disagree with the moves that my “people” were making while still supporting them in general and still supporting their right to exist, and the principles that they're based on.

Because of the personal connection that I felt, even as an outsider, I found it extremely difficult not to get caught up in the feelings that run high throughout the North. During our visit to Corrymeela, Derek reminded us the importance of maintaining critical distance, if for nothing more than our own personal sanity. And here in Derry, I had to remind myself daily of this. The extent to which I had become “sucked in” really struck me on my last evening at the youth club. I was sitting with a bunch of the young adults, and one was detailing the way the police had appeared at her door the previous day to question about a petrol bomb that was thrown right outside her backyard. A petrol bomb! I couldn't believe it. I thought the days of petrol bombs were long since gone. I had to hold back the tears as I faced the facts that this was still a part of these people's reality. Beyond my own fears I realized that I now had faces to attach to the statistics of the “troubles.” Hearing of a tragedy I would now think of Louise, or Caroline, Corona, or Jeanette. There were so many people with whom I had developed

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relationships and for whom I cared that I could never again hear about the tragedies on the daily news without fearing for my new friends.

I truly believe that it was beneficial for me to be placed in the uncomfortable and personalized positions in that it forced me to evaluate my own beliefs and the principles and policies that I do and do not support. Additionally, I think my own personal and emotional connections provided me with a firmer grasp of the issues at hand and enabled me to understand where the Northern Irish are coming from. While I can not claim to, by any stretch of the imagination, understand the situation in the North, I can confidently say that because of the conversations I had, the things that I observed, and the way that I lived while in the North, I can understand where both sides are coming from and I can empathize with each of their grievances and points of view. In the end, I think that speaking with, developing relationships with, and observing the arduous, brave work of these different people strengthened my resolve to continue with peace work and to continue to promote the communication and understanding that I consider to be so valuable yet lacking in our world.

In the greater context, of my own peace studies, and in the context of world politics in general, I think that Northern Ireland serves as a brilliant case study, providing insights to conflict worldwide. Northern Ireland is simultaneously small and manageable yet remarkable complex and impossible to detangle in three short weeks. Having the opportunity to study this microcosm of life and peace building gave me a more complete understanding of the mentality and emotions that run strong throughout a divided society. I could witness first hand the successes and failures behind reconciliation and peace building and the way paramilitaries function, peace walls divide, and gender relations play out in a militarized society. Most importantly I think that my experiences in Derry gave me hope. While the peace that has been established in Derry is by no means perfect, it has come a long way and true progress is being made. As intimidating as conflict torn nations may seem, they are really only

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conglomerations of people, much like myself, and by getting to know them, I was encouraged to believe that they can heal and grow and move past their history.

History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived, and if faced
With courage, need not be lived again.

...

Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brutishness.

The horizon leans forward,
Offering you space to place new steps of change.
Here, on the pulse of this fine day
You may have the courage
To look up and out upon me, the
Rock, the River, the Tree, your country.

...

Here on the pulse of this new day
You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sister's eyes, into
Your brother's face, your country
And say simply
Very simply
With hope
Good morning.³²

³² Excerpts from Maya Angelou's, "On the Pulse of Morning." I think that this poem, by a remarkable woman, speaks beautifully to the power we each have to make our own destinies and the ways that we all can use our pasts to create brighter futures.

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Great Expectations - April 15th 2004

So we arrived in Derry yesterday and assumed that today would be a busy day running around the city and meeting up with people, making appointments etc. I was also expecting to start to get a little bit anxious and flustered, especially if things did not seem to be working out, so in anticipation of this I wrote out a preliminary schedule of what I was hoping to achieve for these first few days. As was expected, I arrived in city center this morning around 11:30 and already I was feeling a little bit tense since I had gotten a late start to begin with and since I was tardy on top of that. Fortunately Rachel and Heidi were very calm about the whole situation and kept reminding me to chill out and go with the flow. They assured me that we would have plenty of time and that we needed to get settled and adjusted in our new environment. Our first stop to settle our phones was extremely successful and afterwards I felt much better. It's a little bit pathetic how dependent I am on having a phone and being able to reach people and how out of sorts I feel when this is taken away. Our next couple of stops were slightly less successful as we were informed that most people, at the Junction, Holywell Trust, the Nerve Center, Magee, and basically everywhere else are off for Easter Week and will not be returning to work until Monday. This was a little bit discouraging that there was very little we could do to make meetings and start to talk to people. I was able to send my package and besides that we mostly just had a relaxing day to readjust to life in Derry. While I knew that there was nothing to be done and that there was nothing that I could possibly do or control being that the people we needed were not at work today I was still a little bit anxious not doing anything and not getting started. I had to keep reminding myself all day what the other ISPs that I had read said repeatedly about going with the flow and not getting discouraged when things didn't seem to be working out. I still have a good two plus weeks to work and so I have to not flip out at every little step along the way. I therefore cut back my expectations for the rest of this week so that I won't get too disappointed and I figure that I will try again tomorrow to see what I can do. And if everything must wait until Monday, then I hope that I can at least enjoy the extended weekend and prepare well for serious work next week.

4/16

meet with Frankie in library and have him make my day - totally random he just came up to give Andrea more information and he was extremely helpful and took out his phone to give us all sorts of people's phone numbers that he had worked with
grumpy and have it ruin my ability to do anything
us descending upon city - running into everyone
small city
everyone connected - Frankie give me number

4/17

meet with Cora Baker
tell me she hopes I don't get disappointed
I picked a lot of big important busy people, might not be able to meet with me
- my fear
Organized - I don't think I really am
Strategies and back ups - keep structure loose - don't worry about walls
falling down if take out a brick
Go to libe and nice lady help me find info on women - she herself was candidate
for NIWC
All the people she lists are the ones I'm going to see - good to hear that at
least I'm on the right track and that I have the right idea with who I hope to
speak with

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Strange that all the women I want to speak with were candidates for NIWC - such a small city and really these are the head honcho people who know what's up Cora's warning about determinism and finding the answer I was looking for from my thesis- similar to my own concern from the beginning - ways to fix it - tomorrow try to rework questions a bit

4/19

Monday morning we got a phone call and Monica was on the phone to set up an apt with me. She was wonderful and offered to pick me up at the house and bring me around to the well woman center. It was so nice of her to offer to be my personal guide and I felt so much more comfortable going with her and not just walking in on my own. I was super nervous to meet with her though. It was a great interview and I got to meet with so many wonderful people doing such amazing work. I was thrilled.

The meeting that pm was a great opportunity to see some real community organizing going on. I also thought it was extremely fortunate for me that Bernadette McAlisky, who I was apprehensive about finding a way to contact, was basically thrown in my face. She was right there for me to talk to but I was surprisingly nervous about meeting her. It seemed strange to me how star struck I was. In the states we don't have access to such public figures and this is truly such a small country. Being at the meeting was also a little strange for us as outsiders in the community. They were discussing the protest to be planned against Bush. Now I'm no fan of your man Bush, by any stretch of the imagination, but I have found myself to be more proud of being American since I've been here. At home I would be extremely critical of the States, our policy, and even American culture and mannerisms. However it was very odd to hear outsiders criticizing and I found myself feeling a little bit defensive. But I don't even know if defensive is the right word, because I certainly disagree with Bush and with American policy. It was just difficult to hear people stereotyping and generalizing all Americans as stupid and buying into the marketing and ignorant to the rest of the world.

4/20

This was a slower day but I felt okay about it. Tuesday night Andrea and I went to meet Jeanette at the Cathedral Youth Club. I was pretty tired from running around all day and it was rainy and I was a little uncertain about going to see her at work, whether she'd be busy or not. As we approached I started to get a little bit uneasy about crossing over the peace wall into the fountain area. The whole time I've been here I've been on this (the Catholic) side of the wall and since Heidi is staying right nearby I've walked past it countless times. The first few times I hardly even noticed the peace wall and how big and intrusive it was. I'm not quite sure what I thought it was... maybe I thought it was a prison, or who knows what I was thinking. Maybe I had just been here so long that it seemed somewhat normal. But at first Heidi pointed it out from her house and then I later realized that it stretched across the whole block. It was strange to go to the other side of a barrier. When we first went through the tunnel it seemed like the twilight zone or like we were on a movie set. It was around 9:30 or so and there was basically no one on the street. We were a little bit scared, and I was very glad that I had someone else there with me. We eventually found the youth place and it was wonderful. Full of colors and pictures and wonderful awards and letters about funding that they had received. It seemed like such a wonderful and warm environment and while at first we got a couple looks of "who are you and what are you doing here?" when we asked for Jeanette someone immediately went to get her. She seemed happy to see us so I felt better because I was a little bit uncertain if it was ok for us to go see her there. While she wanted to talk to us, we could tell that Jeanette was super busy and we could hardly get a word in edgewise. We kind of went with the flow and followed her around barely keeping up. Jeanette

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told us that they were going crazy getting ready for Mary McAleese to come visit next Tuesday. I offered to help a bit and Jeanette seemed thrilled. I was equally as happy that I could do something to give back to her for giving us time. So I spent the evening cleaning computer screens and windows and talking to Mandy, a part time youth worker about the club and what they do and how to rearrange the furniture for the president's visit. When I asked if they needed more help they seemed very grateful so I volunteered to help out again the next night. Walking home Andrea and I were chit chatting away discussing our time and analyzing what we had experienced etc. Suddenly Andrea stopped short to step out of the way of a dead bird and we heard a crash splash behind us. We turned around but didn't really want to look like we were turning around. Andrea thought that she had made something up but I was positive that there was a water balloon. I saw a couple kids down the street behind us and so I wasn't too scared knowing that it was only kids but it was still a little scary. We definitely picked up the pace and tried to get outside the fountain asap. I thought that maybe there was paint in the balloons or something and so I made Andrea check the backs of our legs - we would have been quite angry if our closed had been ruined. We were quite relieved to be back on our side of the wall and we were trying to process the fact that they were just little kids, and we were outsiders but it's still funny how the tense atmosphere and the walls could enter our being and our subconscious.

4/21/04

Today I had less to do and even though I knew that this was going to happen and there would be down time some days, it was still a little bit disconcerting. I was a little bit worried that I wasn't doing as much as I could slash should be doing. Additionally both of the phone calls that I made this morning to two of my main contacts, Margaret Logue and Diane Greer, were somewhat dead ends. Someone at the WEA told me that Diane was on holiday until the 4th of May and then Margaret Logue told me that she was booked for the next four weeks and couldn't speak with me but she was able to transfer me to Melissa Boyle who was able to give me an appt. so that felt a little bit better. All in all it seemed like a slightly disappointing morning that several of the key people on my list were unavailable for meetings. Luckily though I read over my proposal lists and tried to reassure myself that I did have a bunch of interviews and I would be meeting with plenty of people and I would get plenty of information. Looking back now at my notes from my meeting with Cora, she had warned me that I was interested in speaking to the head honchos in the field and I shouldn't be disappointed if they were not available. So seeing that makes me feel a wee bit better. And listening to the other people in our group who were getting tons of interviews I have to keep reminding myself that our projects are all different and we have different needs for our work. Some people need a ton of interviews or lots of people to speak with and others only need a few key ones. And some of us are interested in talking to people that are just average joe shmoe that have all the time in the world to talk to students and others of us are looking to talk to people whose diaries are booked for the next six months. Its all part of remembering that we are all different and we all have different needs and that's okay.

Mark: "growing up in Northern Ireland, there isn't much that scares you"
Wanting to start own political party - the independent party for an independent Ireland separate from the Republic and from Britain
Said that he thinks most people his age would be supportive of it - the friend he wanted to start with was ---- from Loyalist area but now is a Republican I think

YOUTH CLUB TONIGHT:

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At first I didn't really want to go b/c I'm a wee bit lazy and I was pretty content in the house. But as with most things, even when I don't want to go - once I get there I'm so happy that I went.
Kids playing soccer and playing lots of music, playing snooker - seemed like fun and no one even noticed
Cops come into youth club - fully armed. It seemed weird to me that they were there and I was wondering how often they came around and how they were received by the population. I know that I often feel a little uncomfortable around police especially when they have large visible guns on them. Mandy told me later on that a bunch of people in the community would be hostile towards the cops and not like or trust them at all but that "at the end of the day you just have to think that they're there to try to make the neighborhood safer and you need to appreciate that. Back at the house Eamonn was telling us that no one in these neighborhoods would even recognize the cops as a legitimate force and they would not be welcome at all. They would be considered a paramilitary force and the only time they would come into the bogside would be in their fortified vehicles, or with excessive force in homes. They would not patrol the streets and they wouldn't be making friendly visits to the neighborhood youth club to help fix the exercise equipment. So clearly there are still some discrepancies between the communities and how they are treated by the police. Fenians, taigs - the kids all running and yelling that the taigs were on the avenue and they should go and throw water balloons at them. At first I thought maybe they were kidding and when none of the adults seemed to flinch I wasn't really sure what to do. The second time I was sure I heard them when they said that the fenians were there and they should all go. I wasn't going to be the one to stop them but I was a little bit concerned that there was going to be trouble.

What's your name? Wanted to know my last name after I told her my first name was Lauren as if she was trying to place me and figure out where I belong. It was just second nature for them to ask these questions and try to figure me out which was a little strange.

Yankee caps - fascination with america
Play with them

Talk about virgins - at first get uncomfortable and unsure what to do if they look to ask me but then realize that I am the adult in this situation and perhaps I should be thinking about others and not so concerned with myself. Debated whether or not to interfere in the kids conversation and whether it was inappropriate or harassing or not. Again unsure of my place and so I decided to just keep my mouth shut and follow suit even though looking back I could have diplomatically said something

Irish dancing

Felt safe to walk home after meeting the kids - I felt like I knew them now and they knew me and thought I was cool so I would be okay to walk through their neighborhood to get home

Justin asked what I studied and when I told him Peace and Conflict studies he was like wow- that's cool and I thought yeah, it is.

Feel funny when they ask me where I live - unsure if I can tell them I'm staying in the Bogside

Good to see the "other side" since most of my close relationships and contacts here have been Catholic/Republican and that's where I've been feeling the most empathy

Justin says that the other workers don't really hang out with the kids - they like it when they spend time

Interviews ???

I've stopped preparing exact questions to bring to the interviews. While it might be a time factor that I've simply run out of time to think up questions

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ahead of time , since I'm trying to cram the interviews into the time I have left, I think a lot more of it stems from my adjusting to the interview process. I think that it becomes a lot more natural to just ask questions that go along with the flow of the interview instead of trying to pull questions that stem from my own agenda out of the blue. I had a very hard time in talking to people outside of the peace field in keeping a balance between asking what I was looking for and asking about their own individual fields that they were experts in and could give me the most accurate informed info about. I didn't want to have it seem like I was looking for something particular and have the person being interviewed either give me what I wanted to hear or react badly to the academic curiosity.