

Anger: Radicalised in Northern Ireland*My story in a nutshell**Jonathan Barclay**University of Cumbria***Abstract**

This is a poster presentation of my Auto/ethnographic research into Non-Violent Political Radicalisation in Northern Ireland. Growing up in Northern Ireland and particularly when I was working in Belfast as a young man, I was unintentionally politically radicalised through my Protestant culture. Moving away from the political rhetoric of Northern Ireland allowed me to reflect on the anger I had towards the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland, which had no logical underpinning. The aim of this study was to construct new knowledge on Non-Violent Political Radicalisation using my own personal story. Using Thematic analysis my story revealed four themes: Anger, Radicalisation, Royalism and Social Development. Using the relevant literature and theory I critically reflected on these themes using Rolfe, Freshwater and Jasper's (2001) reflective model of What? So What? Now What? The study revealed my arrested social development left me vulnerable to political ideology and Radicalisation, which child educators and policymakers in Northern Ireland need to be aware of. However, reflecting the difficulties of Radicalisation my anger could only be dealt with once I moved away from the ongoing political rhetoric. In summation, to see the difficulties in Northern Ireland as two conflicting cultures oversimplifies the problem, the British government needs to recognise the part they play in perpetuating the intergroup conflict.

Key words: Anger, Nationalism, Non-violent political radicalisation, Northern Ireland, Royalism, Social Development.

“Do you not think he has a point?” My partner and I had been watching an interview with a Sinn Fein spokesman on the news when she came out with this statement. I felt enraged having recently come over to England after growing up and living in Northern Ireland for 34 years during the troubles. I went off on a tirade “what do you know about it”, “have you any idea what he’s done”, “my countrymen are being killed by these type of people” etc. In hindsight I can now see Sinn Fein did have a point and I now recognise the injustice inflicted on the Catholic people in Northern Ireland. I also now have a lot of respect for individuals like the recently deceased Martin McGuinness; a family man who worked tirelessly for his community and refused to leave that community even after he became a public figure. However, at the time I was so taken back by the amount of anger I had towards a culture and people I did not know.

While I was in the middle of the political turmoil, I was conditioned by my Protestant culture to hate the whole race of people I didn’t know. I was stuck in a culture that didn’t allow me to think of anything but Queen and country, culture that prepared me to kill or be killed for Queen and country. Looking back, this was made even more unbelievable considering my best friend was a Catholic and the small town I grew up in was mixed with very little trouble. It was only once I was removed from that culture that I was able to think for myself and change my whole way of thinking on the political issues in Northern Ireland.

Being born in July meant I was the oldest in my class until they changed the academic year from ending in June to ending in August. This meant I was in the wrong year and because I was deemed not clever enough to do my O Levels I was not only moved up a year I was also moved to a new school to do a pre-apprentice course. This also meant I not only left all my friends behind I also moved into a more developed older social group, which rejected me, so effectively I missed two years of social development before I left school at the age of 15. Coming from a working-class background I did what was expected of me and just after my 16th birthday I started work as an apprentice wood machinist in the docklands area of Belfast. An unprepared naive child thrust into an adult world with some of the hardest men you’re ever likely to meet. I can now see although my experiences in childhood contributed this is where I was radicalised.