

‘They’re just normal people’

An account of aspects of a Shankill Road way of life

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(ii)

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Abstract

This thesis involves an exploration of the ways in which a Shankill Road version of working class Ulster Protestant culture 'speaks itself' through members' stories. Much might be said to be known of a working class Ulster Protestant way of life; of changing patterns of employment, of political and religious affiliations, of family relationships, child-rearing, community concerns and, not least, of Loyalist paramilitary involvement and of living with The Troubles. In recognition of academic work that has been undertaken in this field, this thesis illustrates ways in which members express their knowledge of this now well-documented and well-rehearsed 'way of life' in the context of their self-stories.

The style of presentation throughout directs attention toward the centrality of members' stories in any interpretation of lived experience. In noting developments in ethnographic research and presentation - Chapter 2: Methodology - pride of place is accorded to what it is that members have to say about their experience of living within the Shankill Road community. As such, the methodological focus has been that of analytically juxtaposing - at the beginning and end of each relevant chapter - what is described as an 'authentic' voice of the Shankill Road with that of an informed, lay, outsider with the intention of highlighting similarities and differences of what might otherwise be described as Protestant members' common working class experience.

Particular attention throughout this account is directed toward an element of routine *contradiction* pervading Shankill Road members' way of life that manifests in everyday distinctions they make between appropriate 'public' and 'private' presentations of their working class Protestant self and their participation in various activities. Chapters 4 and 5 explore the importance of both 'keeping up appearances' and knowing when and where it is appropriate to remain 'bird-mouthed'. Chapters 6 and 7 focus upon contradictions evident in the context of members' relations with others; with their highly pragmatic and often confrontational response to relationships which, in practice, describes a way of life predicated upon much in the way of routine *hardship* and *hurt*. Finally, Chapter 8 challenges an impression of Shankill Road members as a somewhat 'godless' breed of people. As culture is seen to 'speak itself' through members' stories so the notion of 'God-fearing' is considered in light of members social context of morality.

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I am particularly grateful to my supervisor, Ronnie Munck, for the advice and support he has given me throughout. His unfailing confidence that I would eventually produce something has, perhaps, been the best motivation for someone blessed with a guilt-ridden Protestant work ethic.

Of course there are many other academics along the way who, in one way or another, have inspired me to try a little harder and just 'get it done'. The list goes too far back to mention all those who, now, have reached dizzy sociological heights. However, by way of a footnote to what has been a truly contorted academic career I note just the one, Dr Rawlinson, who taught me far more than I bargained. Through a side-winder into the realms of Religious Studies, he successfully challenged my limited sociological imagination and, thereby, introduced me to a true Master. I thank you.

Finally, I would thank all those 'Shankill born and bred' whose roots I share. I am proud to say that it is much taken for granted that the kettle would soon be on and a bed made-up should I ever arrive on the doorstep. In particular I mention Joseph Wesley Jowett whose untimely death and all that followed near 'wrecked me' and for whom this thesis - the best I could muster without his help - is written solely in memory. God Bless.

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Preface

**In this world we accept a reflection for real,
a counterfeit for genuine,
a piece of glass for a diamond.**

(Maharaj Charan Singh Ji, Words Eternal, 1983: 100)

Introductions, so many have told me, are always difficult to write. Perhaps, in this instance, it was the Title that, at the end of the day, proved most inadequate. By way of compensating for such shortcomings I would note that, in essence, this research endeavour was designed and undertaken in order to illustrate the application of a style of social research. That is, the application of a style of highly qualitative and subject-oriented methodology not much in evidence in studies to date of that community described as working class Ulster Protestants. As such, this thesis primarily addresses 'questions of method' in both the conduct and presentation of social research and, throughout, use is made of what is unquestionably subjective (of the 'subject') data derived from that social context described as the Shankill Road community.

Any data that is cited within the context of this work, therefore, is purposefully used in order to illustrate a methodological procedure rather than as a definitive statement about aspects of members' way of life. And, as discussed within both the Introduction and Methodology, it is perhaps important to accomplish such a qualitative ethnographic task by first observing – watching, listening and, on occasion, participating – and, then, by noting in some considerable detail what it is that members do say about the lives they lead and 'how' they choose to say it. So the research task, here, moves from intense observation – the primary tool of traditional social anthropology – to the detailed recording of members' self-stories. I thank and greatly respect, in particular, the two members whose self-stories - for the purpose of illustration of a research procedure – I make use of here. Equally, I am grateful to other 'born and bred' Shankill residents whose comments – under the collective

reference of 'Shankill Resident' – are, for the purpose of illustrating the 'content' rather than 'form' of members' 'public' and 'private' talk, occasionally incorporated in the commentary.

Given this focus on members' self-stories as the medium through which culture is seen to 'speak itself', it is appreciated that any interpretation of a particular narrative is bound to be both selective and subjective. The validity of any interpretation of members' 'talk' proffered here, as such, is clearly dependent upon the researcher's familiarity with the ethnographic context and relevant literature and an ability to truly comprehend and wrestle with the import of members' 'talk'. As such, it would be misleading to claim that on the basis of this analysis what is finally presented is either a full, let alone representative, statement of a 'way of life'. Rather, such an endeavour hopefully constitutes – as inadequate as it might be at this stage – an attempt to look in some detail at the ways in which members do 'talk' about their lived experience of a particular way of life; 'talk' which focuses on what they – as 'subjects' – think, feel, worry and care about in the context of their everyday lives.

As a precursor to the discussion on Methodology, I would also note that in attempting to be as true to the procedure of 'creative interviewing' as possible, all conversations with members – whether recorded or not – were as free-flowing and unstructured as the context permitted. Hence, of the two main respondents cited throughout, what has been extracted from a vast quantity of transcribed 'talk' is, clearly, only the tip of the iceberg of what was eventually recorded. I have attempted, even so, to be faithful to the gist of what was said and 'how' it was said; that is to the importance members attributed to the 'content' of their talk and the 'form' within which this was presented.

In saying as much it is appreciated that others, in knowing this community from the perspective of 'outsiders', would likely choose quite different aspects of members' experience to focus upon than I have chosen to focus upon here. All I would comment, in defence of my choice, is that what is often important at the level of the everyday is seen to be entirely different by those looking, perhaps, for

explanations – for reasons, for justifications - of particular events or activities attributed to particular individuals or groups. And, as is reiterated at some length in the Introduction, we may choose to simply focus on a particular aspect of a way of life - of conflict, of bigotry, of sectarianism, of gross acts of violence - and through the auspices of any such aspect, often viewed by outsiders as ‘different’, or ‘uncomfortable’, or ‘distasteful’, or ‘politically incorrect’, aim to find an explanation for all we might hope or even want to know about a people. However, in so limiting ourselves from the outset we are likely to ignore whole dimensions of a routine way of life as lived and experienced which, quite possibly, fundamentally contradict that immediate impression. This is not, of course, to say that members – ‘just normal people’ - of any society are not capable of being and doing, on occasion, all that of which they might be accused. However, it is much the case they are also capable of a whole lot more which, given the context of their routine lives, helps us understand and locate such seemingly uncomfortable or idiosyncratic facets of a way of life within a more balanced and meaningful context.

... There are other roads into the unknown, I suppose, but the one I took was the road to Msinga ... it was a worst-case scenario, unfolding in a worse-case place, and yet, and yet, and yet: It was not entirely bereft of hope. There was light beyond the darkness – a tiny pinprick of dawning possibilities, casting just enough of a glow to show the rest of us the way. (Malan, 1990: 422)

Jacqueline Hughes
September, 1999

Introduction

As far back as 1857, two barristers appointed by the Lord Lieutenant to investigate a horrendous outbreak of sectarian violence in Belfast on the previous 12th July reported ... it was 'the lower orders' which seemed to do most of the fighting, suffering and even dying, they commented: 'With them the war is a real one, personal suffering attends it with them, they are maimed in limb and rendered homeless by it. On them falls the misery of what brings advancement to the more exalted.'
(McCann, The Independent: 9.7.1996)

ONE OF THE GIRLS, Margaret L. was telling me, who worked with us in the restaurant was asking how I was. (The girl) says, 'Tell me where she's living and I'll go visit her.' Margaret says, 'She's living up the Shankill.' She says, 'She's what! What in the name of God is she doing up the Shankill! In the name of God whatever possessed her to go up there. Are you serious? Oh, my good God. Is she going from bad to worse?' She never mentioned coming to see me again. Margaret says, 'That changed the subject!'

You see I was always afraid of the Shankill ... Then I started to come up and go to the Co and the wee shops. I says to Billy (son), 'There's lovely wee shops!' And I went round to the shops every morning. And he says, 'For someone who didn't like the Shankill, mind, you're doing rightly round the shops!' I said, 'Mind Billy, they're good. And the people are right and friendly.' 'Aye', he says, 'they're friendly. They're good people. They've looked after me. They really have. Sure, when I was sick and all that, even Mary sent my dinner round every Sunday, and Emma sent me soup down, you know!'

I think if Billy had of died that first time he was ill I never would have been here. No way! I was too scared of the Shankill. The Shankill! Everybody was going shooting, like! I think I imagined everybody had guns at the ready. Every house had a gun, you know. This is what I imagined. (Molly: Recorded Narrative, 1996/7)

This brief extract was part of a story related by Molly, an Ulster Protestant woman whose son, a convicted and time-served Loyalist paramilitary, had recently died of cancer. Molly now lives just off the Shankill Road in a bungalow complex designed for the retired and disabled. All the way along the roads leading from the Shankill Road to her front door the kerbstones are painted red, white and blue, and across the way she looks out upon an old caravan emblazoned with the insignia of the UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force). Molly lives so close to the peace line that from her front room one could literally hurl a stone across to the Falls Road. There is no mistaking which side of the sectarian divide she lives for this is the very heartland of Loyalism; a staunch working class Protestant community.

Molly's small neat bungalow, complete with new bathroom, solid fuel burner and daily home help to stoke and refuel it, forms part of the Shankill re-development scheme. It stands almost on the spot of what would, some twenty years ago, have been the top end of Urney Street; a street known locally as Handcart Alley and remembered, as vividly today as before the re-development, for its somewhat fierce and rough reputation. Some hardmen and good boxers came from this particular street of 'wee kitchen houses' which, interconnecting with other rows of terraces bordering the Shankill Road, was an area familiarly known as the Nick.

Urney Street, as it was, has a certain significance to this narrative for it was home to my grandparents, father, various aunts and uncles. It was a long terraced street within 'spitting distance' of the Falls Road and the two localities, of the Shankill and the Falls, had been linked by a network of little streets and gunnels

before the onset of the Troubles. So, as it transpires, on the very ground where Molly's new bungalow now stands, amid neat crescents of new dwellings with gardens replacing old backyards, had once lived my own family. Indeed, where those old terraced streets had once stood sandwiched between the Shankill Road and the Falls, my forebears had lived from long before the turn of the century, well before the creation of Northern Ireland and the most recent spate of Troubles. Now, this locality of 'The Nick' has become the chosen home of this working class Ulster Protestant woman; a woman who, for years, had been frightened at even the thought of a visit to the Shankill Road.

This simple coincidence of location, rather than anything academic, first drew my attention to this particular Protestant woman and her stories. For, as much as I knew of life in the Shankill from family members and friends, I had rarely concerned myself with how outsiders, whether working class Protestants or others, looked upon this community. As Molly talked about her life and what had brought her to the Shankill, however, it became clear that as unextraordinary as the events of her stories are - for most Shankill families have first hand experience of hardship, of unemployment, of sickness and untimely death, of paramilitary involvement, of prison visiting, of family break-ups, rows and disputes - there was much they contained which insightfully described what she has experienced as an interesting variation on a very familiar theme; that is a Shankill Road version of what both she and I would recognise as the commonalities of a working class Ulster Protestant experience.

So, this narrative begins with an interesting and significant observation; that it was not by choice that this Ulster Protestant woman came to live in the Shankill. Indeed, the Shankill is not the sort of place many would choose to live if not born and bred in the district for it has a somewhat fierce reputation as Molly indicates. And, this reputation, in her view, was well founded given an endless stream of rumours

pertaining to balaclava'd gunmen, hoods and thugs, to shoot-outs, hold-ups and intimidation. Such rumours simply ratified that which she and, quite probably, many others have always been led to believe that the Shankill Road is a 'rough' district and home to 'rough' folk. Such an impression, even so, was mere speculation on Molly's part for, having no family connections with the district, she had never visited the Shankill Road and this was not the sort of place to go on a day trip to the city. The shops might be good up the Shankill Road, with some 'queer good wee bargains' to be had, but it had never been the way of things if visiting Belfast especially during the Troubles to pop-up the Shankill Road just to go shopping. As such, for the first sixty or so years of her life, Molly's impression of the Shankill was less than favourable and, with considerable justification, it would be true to say that she would not be alone in harbouring such a view of this Belfast community.

For all this woman's fears, nevertheless, the Shankill Road community with its somewhat rough and fierce reputation - a 'hard' place of hardmen and hard-nosed women - has now become her adoptive home. And, within the context of her narration Molly explains why living in the very heart of the Shankill alongside known and locally respected paramilitaries, she now feels socially at ease with her neighbours and, even more significant in her view, safe. So, as paradoxical as at first it may seem, the Shankill Road has now become a safe haven for this working class Ulster Protestant woman in an otherwise hostile world.

In brief, it was events surrounding her sons' paramilitary involvement which, eventually, led Molly to the Shankill. While living in Bangor, two of Molly's three sons had become members of the Ulster Volunteer Force. The younger of the two, following a bombing incident, was arrested for terrorist activities and subsequently imprisoned. As a result of his imprisonment in Long Kesh with other UVF members, he was befriended by several leading paramilitary figures from the Shankill Road. These friendships led to Molly's son taking up residence in that Shankill enclave

known locally as the Nick when he was, some twelve years later, released from prison. The significance of these events, to an extent, revolves around the relative importance of the paramilitary presence in the Shankill. For, although it is common knowledge locally, it might be noted that headquarters of various paramilitary groups are to be found on the Shankill Road and this is a community known, first and foremost, throughout Ulster for members staunch Loyalism.

Indeed, there is no mistaking the name of the Shankill Road in Northern Ireland. It has always been closely associated with hard-line Loyalism and this is a district within which much paramilitary activity is known to take place. During recent years, the Shankill has also become somewhat notorious for being home to a contemporary clique of paramilitary activists referred to by the media as 'The Shankill Butchers'. This paramilitary unit was as well known and, in certain quarters, resented locally for intimidating members of the Protestant community as for deeds committed against Catholics. As such, when one of the gang recently became due for parole, it was local gossip on the Shankill Road that his days back in the community would be likely be numbered. This system of rough but decisive justice has always operated in the Shankill and this is a community that, it might be argued, is known to largely police itself.

By reputation alone, therefore, the Shankill was a place which, in Molly's formative view, so-called decent, God-fearing, Protestant folk avoided. It was, perhaps, the very last place she would have chosen to take up residence if circumstances had been different. But, as events unravelled and now with every intention of ending her days in the Shankill, she is to be found in the midst of a community in which she imagined 'everybody had guns at the ready'. So, it seems apposite to say that, although in every other respect this Ulster Protestant woman has led a quite un-extraordinary life, simply by virtue of her choice to become a resident member of the Shankill Road community she is, perhaps, quite extraordinary.

Members 'for talk sake' versions

None of the events which Molly describes in her stories; her son's paramilitary involvement, prison visiting, the trials and tribulations of her domestic life, economic hardships and employment difficulties, sickness and anxiety, her God-fearing ways are, in any sense, unique to one or other working class Protestant community in Ulster. Any differences, indeed, one might argue are of degree rather than of type. And, as such, it is reasonable to say that all those who, with conventional wisdom, might be described as working class members of the Ulster Protestant community - whether living in rural districts, small towns, or the heart of Belfast - are quite likely to be similarly familiar with much that is routinely referred to, by themselves, as their common working class Ulster Protestant experience. For purposes here, this common experience of an Ulster Protestant way of life is referred to as members' 'for talk sake' version; this is the version of a way of life which clearly, explicitly and directly identifies members as working class Protestants.

... We weren't a particularly religious family or in any way particularly Loyalist either. If you describe yourself as Protestant, its main meaning isn't that you were a regular church attender or anything of that sort. You could say it was almost more of a descriptive term like Welsh or Irish or Scottish. Above all what it meant was a negative: it meant that you weren't a Catholic. (Parker, 1993: 336)

... being in a Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist area, whatever you like to call it ... we didn't call it those things in those days (before the Troubles), we were just a Shankill family from the Shankill Road and extremely British. Very proud to be British. But I don't know why we were proud to be British, but we were. It was just part of the culture and the Orange Order and everything would have played a great part in our lives. (Shankill Resident: Recorded Interview, 1996)

... My father came from Sandy Row and my mother came from the Shankill, so those are recognised as the two bastions of Protestantism or Loyalism. So, you could say I'm pure bred pedigree, as far as breeding goes! ... I was brought up in a Protestant environment and the workplace was 95% Protestant. And, the schools I went to were 100% Protestant. (Shankill Man: Recorded Narrative, 1996)

Regardless, therefore, as to whether working class members choose, as they so variously do on occasion, to refer to or identify themselves as Protestants or Loyalists, as Ulster men or women, as British or Irish, or whether they choose, again as they so variously do on occasion, to participate in all that they 'know' as their common cultural heritage, there is much which is, quite unmistakably, known as members'

cultural lot and consistently referred to in conversations. As such, throughout the Province, there is much which is commonly talked about or referred to in what are, here, described as members 'for talk sake' versions of their way of life. However, that members tend to talk quite similarly about who they are and what they may do - their traditions, their sense of history, certain practices and activities - does not mean that there is an equal degree of consistency in what members actually experience or practice in their routine everyday lives. For, not only when one shifts location from Belfast to the small towns and rural districts but even within particular localities like the Shankill, it is evident that when it comes to the actual practice of their lives - 'what they do' rather than 'what they say they do' - members choose quite variously and often, it seems, quite idiosyncratically whether or not to actually participate in activities commonly associated with - commonly talked about as - their working class Protestant way of life.

As such, it could be argued that in the lived experience of members' lives, that is in 'what they do' rather than simply 'what they say they do', there are few hard and fast rules operating at the point-of-practice. In other words, it is not self-evident by what members might say - particularly in the context of their quite public 'for talk sake' accounts - as to who, for instance, does or does not regularly participate in religious practice, who actually attends Orange Order meetings, who turns out and supports marches, who votes or who, on the other hand, quietly chooses not to participate in, or be associated with, anything remotely political and, thereby, purposefully avoid involvement with any thing associated with Loyalism, the paramilitaries, even the Lodges, the Masons or the varied and various Protestant churches and their congregations.

What is observed, therefore, as the practice of members' lives - that is 'what they do' - is often, it seems, at some variance with what, for instance, they might say they do in the context of their more public accounts. Of course, this is not to suggest

that working class Ulster Protestants, of the Shankill or elsewhere, are peculiar in this fashion. Indeed, there is always likely to be some disjuncture between what a person will say they do and what they, then, may do in practice. Hence, all that is being suggested of this particular ethnographic context concerns the relative significance, or degree, of variance between what members may talk about as their cultural practice and what they, then, may do in the practice of their everyday lives. The degree of difference between, for instance, the impression members often afford in the context of their public 'for talk sake' accounts and the reality of their lived experience is, it is argued, quite significant and for reasons to be addressed is, in itself, a quite distinctive cultural trait.

By way of introduction, therefore, to issues addressed within this study; it became apparent when asking members to talk about their lives, that is to talk about events, situations or relationships, that much of what they talk about, often at considerable length, is designed simply to identify themselves as working class members of the Protestant community. In other words, members were found to adopt a very public style of talking about themselves, their lives, significant others. And, this public style of talking, quite irrespective of their personal activities - what they 'do' - is seen to make consistent and constant reference to an acknowledged lot of cultural knowledge which, quite unmistakably, distinguishes their 'self' as one of *us* rather than one of *them*.

It might be suggested, as such, that much of members 'public' talk is intentionally designed to identify themselves as a member of the broader working class Protestant community - as one of *us* - and, through the gaining of appropriate responses as conversations progress so members seek to quite categorically identify all significant others. This very public form of talking about themselves, here referred to as members' 'for talk sake' accounts of their way of life, is quite commonplace. Members routinely use this format, irrespective of what they actually 'do' in the

context of their own lives, to talk about events, other people and the world at large. And, as such, these 'for talk sake' versions, which are quite distinctive in style and tone, constitute a peculiarly working class Ulster Protestant way of publicly claiming a social identity, of addressing others and of routinely talking about the 'content' of their way of life.

The distinctiveness and pervasiveness of this public talk is quite evident. For, irrespective of geographical location within the Province, there is little room ever for mistaking 'who' these people think they are or what they think they should - or *ought* to - be doing and this is largely achieved through members engaging in their 'for talk sake' dialogues. Indeed, working class members quite commonly adopt this public mode of talking which is so distinctive in both form and content that 'who' they are is almost never an issue. Much of the importance of this public talk, therefore, lies in its use as an identification procedure. It enables members, quite simply, to identify their selves and those to whom they are talking and, notably, considerable effort is directed toward establishing credentials and possible common relationships in most, if not all, members' 'public' talk.

This procedure of identification - of *us* and *them* - is so significant in members' conversations that they continually return to it, checking and double-checking. Indeed, much of members' 'for talk sake' accounts revolve around simply identifying who one is through the public disclosure of particular items of cultural knowledge. Dependent on responses members then elicit from their audience, so conversations often abruptly twist and turn if not cease altogether. There is much, also, which members will never refer to directly in what they consider are 'public' contexts. In such circumstances, they equally routinely use forms of indirection - of innuendo, of anecdote, of evasion and secrecy - which serve to conceal that which might be construed as, for example, shameful in their lives.

Much of the process of identification is achieved, as stated above, by appropriate and selective reference to items of cultural content. By interjecting such items into conversations members, in effect, mark out their cultural territory; they seek to establish or re-establish what are considered to be the significant cultural boundaries between what is distinctive in their worldview and any other worldview with which it might, or could, be confused. In this way, as is suggested, both the form and content of members' public 'for talk sake' accounts are intentionally designed to both clarify cultural boundaries and enable members to identify themselves and others, as one of *us* or *them*, with some certainty and immediacy.

In terms of the content of members' public talk, therefore, there is little room for mistaking who is and who is not a working class Ulster Protestant. Indeed, there is much which is seen to be common, throughout the Province, in both what members choose to talk about – the 'content' of their talk - and the way in which they choose to talk – the 'form' of their talk. So, as is suggested, it is primarily through their use of public 'for talk sake' accounts that members, in effect, indicate the importance they attach to simply being able to establish their identity; that is to identify themselves as one of 'us' and, thereby, delineate the boundary between *us* and *them*. And, as such, it might be argued, that establishing identity as one of *us* is what is crucial in most members' public talk.

Establishing one's identity irrespective of an individual's observed practice is, therefore, considered pivotal in this ethnographic context. For, it is the establishment of identity which, in effect, determines whether or not an individual has the right, if and when they choose, to dip in and out of members' common lot of cultural knowledge and make use of this knowledge in the context of everyday activities. Knowing who has this right, it might be said, is therefore far more significant in this context than whether or not a particular member - whoever she or he may be - chooses to exercise this right.

In other words, it appears that in the actual experience of members' lives the real acid test of membership has, in effect, little to do with whether one is seen to put into practice what one preaches. What is crucial, instead, is that whether or not one is seen to participate in all or anything known as one's working class Protestant cultural heritage, that one is seen to know - in so far as being able to reiterate 'for talks sake' - what it is that is contained within the content of the sermon. Much significance, therefore, is in practice attached to members' public talk - to their 'for talk sake' accounts - since these constitutes the primary medium through which members assert or lay claim to their identity. And, it is by virtue of knowing what is culturally appropriate and, on occasion, reiterating one's knowledge that members clearly and categorically identify themselves with the sermon even though, in the lived experience of 'what they do' - their activities - they may often not be seen to practice what they preach. Herein, it might be argued, lies the basic paradox describing much of what is, in practice, members' very way of life. For, as Lek Raj Puri notes:

... The contradiction is not in the lived reality or truth but only in the verbal expression of it. (Puri, 1993: 173)

Identifying the content of the sermon

Much academic research to date focusing on the working class Ulster Protestant community is concerned with, in effect, describing and identifying what is referred to above as the 'content' of the sermon; a sermon which is now academically well rehearsed and documented. And, indeed, whether talking to Molly from Downpatrick, Jimmy from the Shankill Road, Louie from Rathcoole, Sally from Coleraine, there is much which is commonly talked about and largely considered to be an appropriate description of members' working class Protestant way of life. In the context of members' 'public' talk, for example, much is routinely referred to and made use of by most working class Protestants who quite similarly talk about the exploits of local *characters* be they pastors, hardmen, politicians, paramilitaries, 'wide' boys or drunks, the celebration of historical events whether or not they participate, dealings

with the Lodges, the Masons, the bands men, children's Brigades, then perhaps prayer meetings, church outings, about who has been 'saved' or who is in prison, and so on and so forth. And, all such topics as above clearly and overtly suggest what it is that members know as their distinctively Protestant - *Prod* - identity.

Entwined amongst these overtly Protestant cultural markers in members' public talk, are found both direct and indirect references to members' socio-economic position. There is, for example, much talk which revolves around the commonalties of members' working class experience; talk which makes reference to problems of work, of redundancy, of unemployment, of 'not asking no-one for nothing' or of dealings with 'the brue' (Jenkins, 1982: 70), talk of the rough and tumble of local disputes, of housing difficulties, of problem 'domestics', of marriages which are on-the-rocks, of the trials and tribulations of single parenthood, of who is 'involved', who is prison visiting, the latest 'scam' and any 'good wee bargains' to be had and, maybe, but rarely uppermost on the list, all that which constitutes, for members, another daily reminder of the legacy of the Troubles.

All of that referred to above, and clearly a good deal more, constitutes the gist of much of members' public talk. It constitutes, in practice, a sort of cultural checklist which, in the context of members 'for talk sake' accounts they dip-in and dip-out of almost, it might be said, in a predictable fashion. Indeed, there is much commonality in the way in which members do, in effect, dip-in and out of this lot of cultural content which, given the public context of their talk, serves to locate them under the broad umbrella of working class Ulster Protestantism. Of course, there are many minor variations and idiosyncrasies throughout the broader working class Protestant community; many small pockets within which we might, mostly for the sake of being seen to be analytical, attempt to distinguish distinctive local patterns in members public talk. But, for the most part, there is much which is decidedly similar in both the form and the content of members' public 'for talk sake' accounts.

Much of this public talk - both its form and content - is quite purposefully designed to provide an opportunity for members to establish or confirm their own and others credentials as one of *us* and it is not considered to be the forum within which members are either expected or required to disclose much, if any, of their personal dealings; that is what they may actually 'do' in the practice of their everyday life. As such, the notable distinction made between public talk and, so-called, private talk is significant in this context. It constitutes what might be considered an important and distinctive characteristic of what Shankill Road members, for example, would recognise as a working class Protestant way of life.

Indeed, the distinction between the public and the private spheres - what might be construed as the 'appearance' and the lived 'reality' - of members' lives is often quite vast. And, much of what members do talk about or, indeed, are willing to talk about to anyone other than their closest family members, often masks or conceals what is known to be the reality - the 'what they do' rather than 'what they say they do' - of their lived experience. This masking, often achieved by members' use of their public 'for talk sake' accounts but, also, through the use of other forms of indirection and concealment, is quite characteristic of a working class Protestant 'way of life' and is simply, it is suggested, magnified in degree amongst such members as of the Shankill Road community for reasons of history and location. It is, even so, a salient characteristic which is often overlooked by outsiders who, perhaps, are simply overwhelmed by what is perceived as out-pouring of information suggested by members' apparent garrulousness.

What follows, therefore, is an exploration of the ways in which members use their public 'for talk sake' accounts in order to establish and confirm their identity as one of 'us' rather than one of 'them'. Establishing one's identity and the identity of those with whom one is talking is clearly quite crucial in this ethnographic context

and much routine effort is directed toward publicly reiterating one's knowledge of the cultural 'sermon' and of, in effect, *keeping up appearances*. Irrespective of what members may 'do' in the privacy of their lives, it is much the case that much importance is always attached to *appearances*; that is to being seen to be one of *us* and of giving an impression of 'doing very nicely, thank you'.

The clear distinction drawn between *keeping up appearances* in their public talk and the, often, total concealment of the reality of personal lived experience, is quite evident in what Molly, one of the two main respondents, has to say about life in the Shankill. This Ulster Protestant woman, in truth, ushered her self into the role of lay anthropologist as she deciphered and negotiated her way between members' public 'for talk sake' versions of their Shankill way of life and what she, in turn, came to know as the reality of members' lived experience. By way of illustrating Shankill members talk, each of the issues which Molly's narrative relates to are introduced through the voice of the Shankill Man; a man known throughout the Shankill Road community for his paramilitary and political connections who, as events transpired, was instrumental in Molly taking up residence within this somewhat beleaguered community.

Researching in this Ethnographic Context: Questions of Method

For several very practical reasons undertaking ethnographic research within the Shankill Road community could not be achieved solely through traditional research methods. This is a community at the forefront of the conflict in Northern Ireland for some thirty years and residents are wary of strangers and even more wary of questions. As such, much of what members did choose to talk about, when and where, was necessarily left to their discretion for, as I discovered, I could neither force the pace nor significantly direct or order the content. The end result was much of a hotchpotch of scribbled notes and, on occasion, tape recordings and transcripts of what were, for the most part, highly unstructured conversations with local residents

including pastors, pensioners, adolescents, single mothers, social workers, paramilitaries, local fringe politicians and so forth. There were, of course, many people who I talked to who simply would not be drawn on having their stories recorded and, given the local situation, their position was clearly respected. However, in the pursuit of 'thick' descriptions of this way of life I make particular use of extensive conversations with two members; a leading paramilitary figure and a female pensioner. The transcripts of these self-stories form the bulk of members' 'talk' related in the ethnographic description which follows.

In view of the practicalities of undertaking any meaningful qualitative research in localities such as the Shankill Road, it must be acknowledged at the outset that many of the subtleties of distinctions being drawn here - between the spheres of the 'public' and the 'private' - would be lost unless one was reasonably familiar and comfortable with everyday life in that ethnographic context. We may think that the aim of ethnography today, given the availability of technology, is to amass a suitcase full of verbal and visual recordings of one sort or another. However, in practice the bulk of ethnographic work - as was the practice of traditionally trained anthropologists - goes on well before the machinery gets switched on. It is, in practice, much accomplished informally and subtly through immersion and observation. As one contemporary author, Roddy Doyle (1999: 74), so aptly identifies:

- **Never ask questions, Victor ...**
- **Why not? He said.**
- **If you just watch and listen, I said, you'll get better answers. ...**
- **How? ...**
- **No rings, son. No rings on her fingers.**
- **Oh yeah.**
- **Oh yeah is right. Watch and listen and the answers will come strolling up to you. What do you do?**
- **Watch and listen.**
- **Good man.**

So, although the intention here was, essentially, to experiment with a style of social research focusing on the collection and interpretation of unique, highly subjective life-

stories - their content and form – any meaningful interpretation of such life-stories is largely dependent upon close observation and contact with many others describing themselves as ‘Shankill born and bred’. In other words, although much is suggested in the context of members’ ‘talk’ any interpretation is clearly influenced by what I, the researcher, ‘know’ or have observed as members’ way of life; that is by any other knowledge I might have gleaned through immersion within this ethnographic context.

In brief I note; being a descendent of members of the Shankill Road community there has always been some contact maintained with friends and family still living in Northern Ireland. During both the 1970s and 1980s I undertook visits to the Province and re-established some contact with families who would have been neighbours in Conway, Argyle and Urney Streets prior to redevelopment of the Shankill. Since the early 1990s, my visits have become more frequent and I have had regular contact with those described as Shankill ‘born and bred’ still living in Ulster or now residing in England. Upon registering for postgraduate research at Liverpool University, I also made contact, met and talked with a number of prominent members of the Shankill Road community. Due to the style of research I was adopting, more informal than formal ‘conversations’ – upon which much of the interpretive content of the commentary is founded – took place, 1995-1998, between myself and:

- Various local councillors, ‘fringe’ political party executives, women’s group leaders, religious representatives including the recording of members’ ‘conversion’ testimonies, attendance at cross-community meetings including women’s representatives of the Workers Party, cross-community religious representatives (Cornerstone), attendance at various formal presentations and lectures arranged by the Health and Social Services Trust, Making Belfast Work, political party forums.
- Ex-Loyalist prisoners (UVF & UDA), Loyalist prisoners’ welfare / rehabilitation workers, Quaker and non-denominational prison welfare officers,

- Community workers including those of the Northside Project (Drug and Solvent Abuse), the Shankill Stress Group (Prescribed Drugs self-help group / Re-grieving group), Liaison Officer of the Shankill Women's Forum, Project workers/Co-ordinator of 'Health profile of the Greater Shankill Area' initiative, officials representing 'Making Belfast Work', North and West Belfast, Health and Social Services Trust, and so forth,
- Local members – male and female - of the Shankill community ranging from; school children, employed and unemployed youth, single parents, pensioners, psychiatric nursing / care workers, members currently diagnosed as suffering from anxiety, depression, as agoraphobic, prescribed drug abusers, members of various church congregations from born-again Christians to lapsed Church-goers, Orange Order members, Free Masons, shop keepers, office workers, daily home-helps, local A.C.E workers, and many others.

It was apparent from the outset - and in light of previous experience of ethnographic fieldwork in northern India and Nepal – that much of my appreciation and understanding of this ethnographic context was dependent upon a more unobtrusive rather than overtly obtrusive style of social research. Hence, much effort was directed toward unobtrusive observation techniques in the full knowledge that 'who' I was and what I was doing was known. It was not uncommon for those who did not know me – during home visits, local meetings and the like – to ask quite directly of others present 'who' I was and, having noted my personal background and family connections with the locality, they generally relaxed. However, it would be accurate to say that most members were highly reluctant to have, what might best be described as 'thickly' descriptive and in-depth, conversations recorded. This is not to say that they would not make the 'odd' comment on events, personalities, rights and wrongs, as one would hope to obtain if undertaking 'brief' media-style / survey interviews. But, when it came to lengthy, in-depth and 'thick' rather than 'thin' accounts, it was a somewhat different story.

As such, recordings of, for instance, conversion testimonies, short semi-formal interviews with more articulate members – notably those with high public profiles or local office - were readily available and a few of these so-called ‘thin’ – in contrast to ‘thickly’ descriptive – recordings are referred to within the context of the ethnographic commentary under the collective title of ‘Shankill Resident’. The bulk of reference to members’ talk, however, is quite purposefully directed toward the narrative accounts of two main respondents who agreed to talk – and have this ‘talk’ recorded - in some depth about events in their lives, about their relationships, feelings, doubts, cares and worries. Contact was established with both respondents through mutual acquaintances and, I note, prior to this initial contact I had previously not met either respondent so was unaware of the intricacies of their personal life stories.

Having being initially introduced to both main respondents cited in the text, I met and talked with them quite informally – and in the company of others – on several occasions. With respect to ‘The Shankill Man’ contact was established primarily through the offices of a local political party having its headquarters on the Shankill Road. This particular man has a high local profile but prefers not to be a ‘front runner’ when it comes to the media, to local politics and the like, so it was interesting, perhaps, that he agreed to spending some considerable time – given his other commitments – in talking about more personal aspects of his life. Recordings took place on three separate occasions and, it is noted, that during these quite lengthy sessions the tape recorder was at times turned off as he continued to conduct other business. I met socially with this man, in the company of a mutual acquaintance, on a number of other occasions, also observed him in association with colleagues, women friends and ‘clients’, and travelled with him when visiting Loyalist prisoners. Recorded conversations took place in a room above party political offices on the Shankill Road.

I was, similarly, introduced to Molly - the other main 'voice' referred to throughout the ethnographic commentary – through a mutual acquaintance and visited her socially on any number of occasions prior to suggesting that we might record her narrative. Indeed, as it transpired this lady knew various Shankill residents with whom I share a common family 'name' and, through such common interests, we developed a strong rapport. Subsequent to the recorded conversations – some fifteen hours of tape-recordings transposing to some 3/400 hundred pages of transcription – I continued to visit this lady and, through her, was introduced to a number of other Shankill residents; an Elim Pastor, his wife, various home-helps, neighbours, her former friends from outside Belfast, amongst others. All recorded conversations with the two main respondents cited were transcribed verbatim.

In the process of organising and presenting the conversational 'data' much attention was paid to both the 'content' and the 'form' of members' accounts as the primary source of ethnographic data. Clearly, there was a certain amount of repetition in their accounts and this was quite deliberately deleted during the process of editing. Also, as with all story telling, there was a tendency for the two main respondents to wrap one storied-event within the context of another, to side track and back track. Hence, in order to present a relatively 'brief' yet coherent narrative extract – for the purpose of illustration – storied events of members' talked-about lives have been selectively extracted from the main body of 'thick' narrative in order to portray, more succinctly, one or other aspects of their way of life. At all times, I have attempted to be faithful to what it is that members actually said – the recorded data – and situate this 'content' within what was often a somewhat emotive story telling context.

By way of further introduction to questions of methodology, I would draw attention to a text which, far more eloquently than I may, addresses the sort of issues which arise when attempting to describe a way of life with which one has some personal familiarity. It is, perhaps, simply because of this familiarity that the logic

governing ethnographic investigation, itself, suggests a somewhat different way of going about things; that is an alternative approach to investigation which, for instance, Rian Malan (1990) talks of in My Traitor's Heart. This particular text is as much about the difficulty the author experienced in coming to terms with and knowing how to give expression to his own experience of a way of life, as in the giving of an account of that way of life which, knowing it as he did, still made sense to others who had not had a similar experience.

Primarily because of Malan's familiarity with the South African way of life, as he writes, he found it difficult to tread the usual journalistic or academic paths of investigation which, of themselves, suggest certain models, solutions and explanations. Such paths, he considered, how ever carefully he trod them did not arrive at what he felt or recognised to be a version of a South African way of life which had meaning in light of his own experience. As he explains, the life he had known had been full of contradictions which, at each twist and turn, refused to fit neatly into any current mode of analysis and, therefore, it was problematic to simply focus on one or other aspect of a way of life - on, as he considers, how members 'murder each other' - and in terms of this one dimension proffer what he felt were meaningful explanations of an entire way of life. Around the corner, as he knew from experience, there was bound to be some thing that immediately and quite obviously contradicted what this one aspect, or dimension, was suggesting.

So, in an attempt to come to some understanding of a way of life which had both confused and tormented Malan he returned to his native South Africa to, as he writes, 'face his country, his tribe and his conscience'. He had been born into and lived with what seemed to him the paradox of his South African way of life and it was the contradictions quite evident in his experience of this way of life that he wanted to explore. However, as he discovered, by virtue of having lived the experience, knowing it intimately and recognising the sort of feelings it generated in himself let

alone others, he did not - as if by virtue of 'having been there and done it' - find it at all easy or straightforward to describe that way of life. His problem, as he continues, was how to render the paradox of his experience. That is how to present what would appear to be a plausible account of a way of life that was so often and so evidently contradictory:

... So I threw away the book that was to be and set out to confront this thing in a place where I knew it lay - in myself. I have told you several murder stories, but the true subject of this narrative has been the divided state of my own heart. I have always been two people, you see - a Just White Man, appalled by apartheid and the cruelties committed in its name, and an Afrikaner with a disease of the soul. for me it was a question of being white in Africa, the continent of cruel dictators and endless famine.

... There were nine generations of Boer blood in my veins, and they drummed like thunder in my ears. They said, there is no middle ground. When the day comes you'll still be whitey. ... And they also said, there is only one choice, Malan. Hew to your tribe, be true to your race, and let the white rock stand in the turbulent African sea. (Malan, 1990: 412,3,4)

Clearly, there is no attempt here to draw parallels between the experience of white South Africans and that of working class Ulster Protestants. Rather, interest is directed to what Malan suggests was the real difficulty he experienced in finding a literary vehicle which would do justice to any description he might offer of a way of life known to be routinely full of anomalies. For him, it was much a question of whether it is ever possible to 'render a paradox' and, if so, might this ever be achieved through what might be described, in academic terms, as 'normal methodological channels'. As Malan says:

... How do you render a paradox? I ran because I wouldn't carry a gun for apartheid, and because I wouldn't carry a gun against it. I ran away because I hated Afrikaners and loved blacks. I ran away because I was an Afrikaner and feared blacks.

... It was quite clear, even to a small boy, that blacks were violent, and inscrutable, and yet I loved them. It was also clear that they were capable, kind, and generous, and yet I was afraid of them. The paradox was a given in my life, part of the natural order of things.

I was born into an agony of polarisation and felt I had to commit myself one way or the other. I couldn't just stand there, paralysed by the paradox. (Malan, 1990: 93-4,103)

Perhaps because of which side of the divide I was familiar with in Northern Ireland, much like Malan I had experienced a sort of academic paralysis when it came to descriptions of much which was both antithetical and contradictory in what I knew to be the lived experience of members of this working class Ulster Protestant

community; a community whose way of life for years has well and truly been underwritten and writ large by the Troubles. And, similar to Malan, my initial thought was to describe what life might mean to members, given such circumstances, through an exploration of the sort of 'damage' they were prepared to inflict in order, one might suppose, to protect and sustain that which they valued as their way of life. So it was, at the outset, that I found myself drawn to tales of 'murder', to the exploits of paramilitaries, to evidence of gross bigotry and sectarianism, to victim's stories of survival and grief. Like so many before me, I was drawn to stories which immediately focused upon members more horrific experiences of the on-going conflict as if these, and these alone, were pivotal to an understanding of all that these people were or are or might ever be. And, in doing this, I realised how much I was missing out in the description of a way of life which I, also, knew to be full of friendship, caring, warmth and hospitality.

So, for all the attention which stories of murder, of terrorism, of 'stiffing', of 'romper' rooms, gunmen and hoods, of intimidation and racketeering, of gross bigotry and sectarianism attract, it was evident from my own experience and from talking to members of the Shankill that life is something more than could ever be portrayed in analyses of accounts and stories of excesses such as these. Of course, this is not to say that certain members, on occasion, do not participate in all that which is described in such accounts but, rather, it is quite evident that members also participate in and have experience of a great deal more – in the context of their routine everyday lives - which, perhaps, quite fundamentally contradicts our immediate perception and understanding of a life of conflict, bigotry and confrontation. It was to these everyday stories that I was drawn; stories in which – as surprising as it may seem – talk was largely of families and neighbours, money worries, local incidents and local characters. And, hence, the selection of what are considered to be everyday, quite mundane aspects of a way of life as presented within the ethnographic commentary.

So, yes, on occasion members of this, or any, community may appear to be grossly violent or bigoted or arrogant or self-interested. And, on occasion they might be heard to crack the grossest of jokes, make the most bigoted of statements, be the least compromising and exhibit minimal tolerance. Indeed, they may, as Pearce describes Ulster Protestants:

... have a gift for graceless self-pity which makes absailing lesbians look conciliatory. Also, like all fringe zealots, they live at the centre of their existence, interested in themselves, themselves and themselves. (Pearce, The Guardian: February, 1995)

Yet, it would also be true to say, from personal experience and research into this way of life, that these people are also generous, hard working, accommodating and friendly. A people who, as Molly found in the Shankill, against all the odds as might be popularly conjectured, welcomed her into their community and amongst whom, for all the tales of murder and violence, she now feels safe and 'at home'.

The contradictions underlying a way of life, it might be suggested, become more evident the more one knows that way of life and the more one is capable of, for instance, deciphering between what members may *say* they think, feel and do and what is the reality of their lived experience. Such contradictions underwriting a way of life make it extremely difficult to meaningfully describe what is actually going on. And, so it is that much for the sake of feeling able to talk about things at all in a way which we hope will make sense to others, there is an inevitable tendency to oversimplify what it is observed as a way of life and offer accounts or explanations in seemingly familiar but often very narrow and selective ways. These versions - be they of terrorism, of paramilitary involvement, of racketeering, of sectarianism or bigotry - then have a tendency to become our vehicle for expressing all that we feel we need or want to understand of that way of life. What follows is, therefore, a modest attempt to redress this balance and situate members' lives within the context of their everyday experience of way of life.

Methodological issues pertinent to research in this context, as such, relate primarily to the question posed by Malan (1991): 'How to render a paradox?' Is it possible to provide an account of a way of life that is known, from one's own experience, to be riddled with contradictions? Is it ever possible to portray a way of life which often seems far from any comfortable version or model predicated, as might be hoped, upon some universally accepted principle of 'reason' whereby members, let alone outsiders, might say with some certainty what is 'right' or what is the 'truth', what is 'fair play' or what is 'just' or justified, here?

Such a complex of issues appear to lie at the very heart of members' way of life in this ethnographic context. It is so complex and apparently contradictory that it would be true to say this is probably a 'way of life' which simply does not neatly lend itself to conventional modes of investigation, analysis or presentation. Indeed, most studies to date which do focus on working class Ulster Protestantism - although often brilliant in their exposition of one or other aspect of members' lives - do not challenge nor make evident this complexity of contradictions which lies at the heart of members' lived experience. Instead, in focusing on one or other aspect of members' lives; on the structure of local organisations, on the nature of religious affiliations, relations with Catholic neighbours, on the paramilitaries, on members' sense of history, their traditions, or socio-economic change through this century, so the inherent complexity of members' routine way of life is overlooked. There is little appreciation, as such, of the way in which many working class Protestants quite routinely accommodate much in their everyday experience which is seemingly contradictory and at odds with what they are considered to 'know' as their cultural lot and, often, what they will talk about in the context of their 'for talk sake' accounts.

An ethnographic account of life in the Shankill, therefore, must in some way or other reflect what is, here, described as the paradoxical nature of much that is members' way of life. Members may well be expert at negotiating their way through

the potential complexities and contradictions of their everyday lived experience, but it is the way in which they do this which is central to a description of life in this ethnographic context. In brief, members are able to get on with the practicalities of their lives - with what it is that they have to do and be seen to do - by, in a sense, becoming expert at *keeping up appearances*. And, much of this is achieved through the reiteration of 'for talk sake' versions which allow them, in effect, to publicly suspend judgement on whether an event or activity is right, or fair, or just, or down right wrong. Life has to go on. That is the bottom line. And it does go on. However, on closer inspection, one realises that life, in its' practice, goes on much in a state of suspended contradictions for if members were to analyse too closely or, perhaps, voice too loudly what they experience as the lived reality of such a state of affairs, quite simply, they would not be able to get on and live the life at all.

It is in attempting to illustrate what living this life might, essentially, feel like that this study of the working class Protestants of the Shankill Road takes the form which it does for, as Shostak (1982) says in the introduction to *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*:

... When I asked questions (of other anthropologists) about what they were like as people and what they felt about their lives, I received answers so varied that they seemed to reflect as much the personalities of the individual anthropologists as anything they had learned about the !Kung.

No matter whom I talked to or what I read, I did not come away with a sense that I knew the !Kung. How did they feel about themselves, their childhood, their parents? Did spouses love one another; did they feel jealousy; did love survive marriage? What were their dreams like and what did they make of them? Were they afraid of growing old? Of death?

(So) Talking to people and asking questions that encouraged them to talk openly to me became the focus of my fieldwork. (Shostak, 1982: 5-7)

Overview

The structure and style of the content of this thesis takes into account questions of 'method' (Chapter 2) which reflect upon the collection, analysis and presentation of members' self-stories. Extracts from such self-stories, given as illustrations of *members' knowledge*, provide the contextual boundaries within which salient themes

and issues running through members' everyday lives; of differences and contradictions, of keeping up appearances, of stalwart qualities of character and biting one's tongue, of volatile personal relations kept primed by a flow of often trivial confrontations, rows and disputes, of living in a 'hard' place amongst 'hard-nosed' people, and of how members gauge what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' for them, are discussed.

We may think from a reading of available literature that much is known about a people. At least, we might think it is as much as we need, or want or would like to know. And, indeed, much which we learn from academic or media sources often suggests, if the truth be known, that these may not be the sort of people who, perhaps, are deserving of our time and effort or amongst whom we might ever feel comfortable. As such, what follows is predicated on members' views of what, in effect, it feels like to live the life which others have, so often, written about in a somewhat disparaging and cynical manner. This is not, it might be noted, an apology for a way of life which many may think has well passed its 'sell-by date'. Rather, it is an illustration, through Shankill residents 'talk', of the often paradoxical nature of members' worldview - a worldview predicated on contradiction and 'difference' - which underlies much of what they know as their social and cultural reality and what they do in the context of their lived experience.

One may talk to a hundred different people on one's journey up the Shankill Road and every member's story will be different in detail. One may ask a hundred people the same question and, it has to be said, one is likely to get a hundred different responses. As Lieblich et al comment:

... no two interviews are alike, and the uniqueness of the narratives is manifested in extremely rich data. (Lieblich, 1998:9)

Hence, the gist of members' stories presented here are those of two main respondents; Molly a Shankill resident originally from Downpatrick and Jim, a Shankill man 'born and bred'. Both voices, at one level, are very similar in belonging to working class

Ulster Protestants for, as will be illustrated, such members of the broader Ulster community do have common aspirations, common expectations, a common pool of knowledge and activities. However, whereas that voice described as 'The Shankill Man' is very much the public voice of the Shankill - what is referred to in local literature as the 'authentic' voice of working class Protestants and within which we only rarely glimpse the private world behind the *appearance* - in the alternative version provided by Molly we begin to glimpse the 'private' world behind the *appearance* that Shankill members often seek to maintain. These two main voices introduce and round off each section of the ethnographic commentary and, clearly, much of what each member talks about is relevant throughout for there are no hard and fast boundaries between facets of members' way of life.

Briefly each section of the ethnography addresses the following themes:

- **Keeping Up 'Appearances':** 'All shined up to the knocker!'
- **Qualities of Personhood:** 'It doesn't do to be bird-mouthed!'
- **Personal Relationships:** 'But they stick together, don't they?'
- **The Social Context of Violence:** 'I tell them as I see it not as they would like to hear it.'
- **Contextualising Morality:** 'I'm not religious but I'm God-fearing!'

Keeping Up 'Appearances': 'All shined up to the knocker!'

One of the most striking characteristics of members of the Shankill Road community is the importance they attach to 'keeping up appearances'. Of course, to some degree the appearance which members hope to portray is significant but, in general, it is the procedure or performance that is pivotal. Hence, one may be living from 'hand to mouth' yet one's wee kitchen house, as Molly says, will be 'all shined up to the knocker!'. Much due to this emphasis on appearance, there is an enormous reluctance on the part of members to disclose their problems as problems, to talk about hardship

as if they need help, to say very much, indeed, about the reality of their personal lives outside of the confines of their immediate family and neighbours.

This prioritising of the appearance members hope to portray rather than the reality of their experience is, to a great extent, evident in the context of members' 'talk'. In other words, they have a particular pattern which constitutes much of what is here described as their 'public' talk or, given this particular context, their 'for talk sake' accounts of a way of life. And, often, members are heard to say, 'Oh, well, for talk sake ... it's sort of way like ...' Of course, such accounts or versions of their activities and experiences have many commonalities with other working class Protestants and such commonalities form the basis of these accounts. In contrast, there is much evidence of another distinctive - if 'private' - version of what constitutes, in effect, the reality of members' experience. This first section explores various obvious and everyday aspects of this emphasis on 'keeping up appearances'.

Qualities of Personhood: 'It doesn't do to be bird-mouthed'

Shankill Road members are accustomed to living with hardship of one sort or another and harbouring feelings, mostly in private, of considerable hurt and grief. As such, it is as much taken for granted that life will be fraught with recurrent difficulties inducing feelings of loss and hurt as it is that, at 'the end of the day', there can be in principle 'No Surrender'. So, knowing life as they do - the reality of their experience - there is a deep rooted understanding that when it comes to the practicalities of managing this life there is little choice but to buckle down and simply get on with it. The way in which members get on with it, that is how they cope with life's routine hardships and difficulties, is of some interest.

It is somewhat evident in this context that the rules pertaining to the 'doing' of their lives - the getting on with it all - carry a heavy expectation that members will 'buckle down' and 'grin and bear' their lot with some public decorum. Again, this is much to do with members' general sense of maintaining an appropriate 'appearance'. As such, they learn early on how it is appropriate to talk about facets of their lives;

from the pleasures and gains, to the hardships and hurts. And, most important, they learn how not to talk directly or openly about things which are recognised as cutting close to the bone; that which, for example, causes them considerable personal difficulty and carries a heavy personal liability.

For the most part, then, the lesson members do learn - and the lesson is strict - is founded upon an expectation that, at least publicly, they will 'put-up and shut-up' and, by doing so, they maintain an appropriate appearance in the context of their public 'for talk sake' accounts. The result, clearly, is that members rarely articulate directly - make public - what may be their real worries, fears, problems or difficulties since there is a high cultural onus on saving expressions of such feelings or emotions - those which hint at members' vulnerability - for the most private of social contexts.

At times we may ask what it is that drives any community, what is truly distinctive about the way members perceive the world out there and, in a sense, appears to underwrite much of what they may say and do. It could be argued that, for Shankill Road members, one such cornerstone or driving force is founded upon an often purposefully concealed dimension of hardship and hurt running through much of members' lived experience of this way of life. It is a personal dimension which members, much in order just to cope with their lives, have learned to live with and, for reasons addressed throughout, which they have rarely referred to publicly or directly. It is suggested that this is much the case since, to talk of one's 'self' in this way would be to, essentially, contradict what are considered to be most prized and highly valued *qualities of personhood* - of endurance, long suffering, forbearance - describing their working class Protestant 'self'.

Personal Relationships: 'But they stick together, don't they!'

Not wishing to sound flippant it would, nevertheless, be somewhat true to say that the social context of personal relationships and family life in the Shankill Road is members primary, most instructive and immediate, introduction to the broader dimensions of life's battle zone. For, regardless of the 'appearance' which members

often are at such pains to protect, this primary dimension or battle-zone is more often than not fraught with tempestuous personal relationships, with everyday confrontations, disputes and family feuds. As such, the positive emphasis which members undoubtedly place upon the notion of 'family' per se is tempered, in practice, by a persistent undercurrent of boiling and feuding relations between members regarded and described as kin.

This state of somewhat volatile personal relations, it might be argued, is a quite routine expectation and accepted state of familial play. Members, as such, operate largely upon an expectation that certain sorts of personal relationships are, by definition, charged and vulnerable. And, much due to this expectation, they routinely test out – put to the text - these personal relationships and, thereby, might be seen to indirectly manufacture rows, confrontations, feuds and the like. Indeed, rows and arguments spark off with some frequency and regularity and what begins as pure speculation rapidly escalates into full blown 'feuds' between members of the same family or different family groupings. When arguments do escalate, which is not infrequent, it is often the conjugal bond that proves to be the 'weakest link' in the extended family chain.

There are clear parallels in this context of personal relations with the discussion in the following section on the 'cycle of revenge' and the 'role of sacrifice'. For, as is argued, in order to 'put a lid on' what might be described as domestic feuding, certain relationships are routinely seen as 'offerings' at the sacrificial altar of family life. The conjugal bond between husband and wife is often the first to be sacrificed and this particular bond will be severed well before inter-generational, particularly mother-daughter-son ties, are allowed to waver.

Beneath this obvious and volatile dimension of personal relations and family life, a dimension often predicated on petty arguments, feuding and domestic violence, there is a strong sense, even so, of Shankill family members 'sticking together'. In the face of considerable adversity, members do show enormous public loyalty to those within their immediate family or locale. However, this loyalty is often seen to carry a

considerable personal price or liability within a context – described by much *hardship* and *hurt* - in which there is a somewhat shrewd, instrumental and, perhaps, calculative approach to personal relationships and family life.

The Social Context of Violence: ‘I don’t think anybody would look down on you here in the Shankill if your son was in.’

As commented upon throughout, the reality of members’ lives, what they understand as *normal* in terms of their lived experience, is often glaringly at odds with what they may talk about in the context of their very public ‘for talk sake’ accounts. For example, quite routinely members talk about the vast array of illegal and, on occasion, violent activities taking place on the Shankill Road. They talk about particular dealers, business men or paramilitaries, they discuss black-market deals and where there is a ‘good wee bargain’ to be had, they mull over rights and wrongs of hold-ups or shootings or punishment beatings and, of recent years, they talk much about local drug dealers and addicts.

In all this quite public talk, however, it is much the case that members ensure that they personally distance themselves from most, if not all, of such activities that, by implication, might link them with anything overtly illegal or violent. As such, they rarely acknowledge their current paramilitary status even though, for the most part, everybody within the community knows or has access to such information. Similarly, they are very reluctant to be associated with black-market deals although everyone, in some shape or form, in the Shankill is benefiting from this black economy. And, equally, they distance themselves completely from forms of high-profile violence, as McFarlane (1986) describes, within their ‘folk interpretations’ - seen as examples of ‘public’ talk - even though it is quite evident from what is indicated in the context of ‘private’ talk that they know different.

This public distancing from anything overtly illegal or violent is a routine way of handling such knowledge in members’ ‘for talk sake’ accounts and, as is self-evident, a somewhat necessary way of dealing with items of local knowledge which are, inherently, ‘dangerous’. However, this quality of risk - or danger - does not of

itself imply that these activities or, indeed, those who engage within them are considered abnormal or unusual within this social context. Rather, it is the normality of such activities and practitioners which describes this situation. That members choose to publicly conceal - not to publicly 'talk' about - their personal experience of such activities, therefore, is a strategy designed to cope with their perception of broader societal concerns and issues rather than any fundamental feelings that, given their history, what they do is anything less than the activities of 'normal' people.

Contextualising Morality: 'I'm not religious but I'm God-fearing'

From what has been said of rows and disputes, of illegal activities and violence, of hardship, much grief and hurt, it might be assumed that these are, indeed, a 'God-less' people. A people who, in not considering themselves to be a regular church-going community nor, by reputation, particularly religious have, in fundamentalist terms, simply 'lost their way'. However, although not overly making use of the twenty or so different churches in the Shankill, members often describe themselves as a 'God-fearing' people. For, although much of what they do, on an everyday basis, is not determined by religious activities - by church attendance or worship - it is their sense of 'God-fearing' that, in practice, describes where they draw moral boundaries and a 'concern for others'.

There is some mileage to be gained in this context from viewing members' moral life as beginning with their conception of 'self' or personhood. For, the way in which members talk about their 'self', about significant 'others', and their 'concern for others' is a significant key to understanding how they structure their moral worldview; that is how they decide upon what is 'right' and 'wrong' in the context of their everyday lives.

Morality, when viewed in the broader context of Ulster Protestantism is most often talked about in terms of members' religious belief or practice. However, in the context of Shankill life, it is members' sense of 'God-fearing' that presents itself in their narratives as somewhat pivotal. This notion - operating as a form of root

metaphor - proves a useful tool in understanding, for instance, how members distinguish between those they include - 'us' - and those they exclude - 'them' - from their moral community. It is a graduated notion, as used by members, which in its use quite effectively illustrates ways in which moral boundaries and members 'concern for others' are negotiated.

As such, to be considered 'God-fearing' is a somewhat prized quality of personhood amongst Shankill members. It might even be said that this quality, when fully manifest, ranks alongside qualities of toughness and magnanimity associated with traditional hardmen who triumphed over adversity with their fists. Here, of the truly 'God-fearing' few - of whom there are as many stories today as of the hardmen of old - triumph is even more resounding, given the known context of Shankill life, for it is over the 'sins of the flesh'. Within both lay and paramilitary ranks it would be fair to say that these truly 'God-fearing' few are currently seen as the 'moral hardmen' of the Shankill.

Methodology: How culture 'speaks itself' through an individual's story

How individual's recount their histories, what they emphasise and omit, their stance as protagonists or victims, the relationship the story establishes between teller and audience, all shape what individuals can claim of their own lives. Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are a means by which identities may be fashioned. (Rosenwald et al, 1992: 1)

Interest here is with those styles of ethnography which focus on the narrative of the 'subject' as central to a description of a form of life. Such styles of ethnography are viewed as complementing and deepening, not taking the place of, that knowledge we may already have of a community. As such, the intention here is to illustrate facets of a way of life and elaborate upon knowledge of a cultural collectivity which is currently available, through the use of members' narrative expressions; that is members' representations of their social reality. As Johannsen (1992) says:

Contemporary trends in ethnography practised under the rubric of interpretive or post-modernist anthropology are characterised by a self-critical concern with the representation of culture. The principal products of this new ethnography are experiments in exposing the author in the text and establishing a dialogue between ethnographer and informant in order to share authority in cultural representation. (Johannsen, 1992: 71)

As such, what follows could not be described as a definitive version - description or portrait - of a way of life which is representative of all major facets of a local culture as experienced by members. Rather, the aim is simply to explore particular members' representations for what these suggest are important features, facets or aspects of the lived reality of members' experience. This study, therefore, constitutes a cursory exploration of several members' narrative accounts of their lived experience. It is a

study undertaken in order to seek some understanding of how members may feel about the lives they lead. And, as such the focus is upon what specific events and experiences have meant to particular members in the context of their personal relationships and relations with 'others' and how they choose to talk about these aspects of their lives. In other words, looking to what appears to feature as important, or sensitive, or painful, for them in the context of their storied lives.

Using members' knowledge in such a way is bound to be controversial but suffice it to say at this point:

... The suspicion of members' knowledge reverberates to the methodological level. Social science often seeks to collect its own data, specifically framed to answer its own questions, uncontaminated by members' concerns and procedures. Even classic field workers recommended observation *in situ* because it provided data that were not dependent on members' formulations. In part, the justification for field research was that the researcher could "see for him or herself" instead of having to take the word of the member. Again, the presupposition that the field researcher knows better than the member underlies this view of field work as a distinctly and specifically observational method.

The rise of phenomenological and related approaches in field research on social worlds, however, has re-established the significance of members' accounts and perspectives. (Emerson and Pollner, 1988: 189)

By focusing on members' narrative accounts that, by definition, are bound to be highly subjective, one is clearly not attempting to quantify members' responses or provide generalisations about a way of life. Rather, all that is suggested, by way of a commentary pertaining to aspects of members' stories, is speculative and an attempt, on my part, to be analytical in the face of a veritable mass of highly qualitative data. In saying as much, however, is not to suggest that this has been an entirely random or subjective, in the sense of uncritical, ethnographic venture.

Indeed, there has been much rigor involved in the execution of the research; in familiarisation with the community, in the selection of potential respondents, in the recording, transcribing and editing of members' narrative accounts, and, also in attempting to understand the full implications of members' 'talk' and in deciding how best to present that which members describe as their way of life. Much attention, as

such, has been paid throughout to the presentation of as objective and unbiased a depiction of member's representations of social reality as possible in order to suggest, if nothing more, what might be several of the salient characteristics of their way of life.

Methodological issues that are addressed here, clearly, are not specific to sociological or social anthropological studies of the Ulster Protestant community. These issues, however, do have a considerable bearing on both the way in which much social research has been conducted within this ethnographic context and the way in which ethnographic data has been, subsequently, interpreted and presented. Mindful of such, my intention is to look to the procedures or methods, primarily of observation and interviews, according to which social ethnographic research has traditionally been conducted. And, then, to consider how such methodological practices may underwrite and subtly influence the ways in which we might choose to describe and reach an understanding of that ethnographic context of working class Ulster Protestantism.

It is important to note, at the outset, that this was not an exercise designed to discredit findings of studies founded upon more traditional methodological styles of social research. There has been much excellent traditionally crafted anthropological research undertaken amongst Ulster Protestant communities and reference is constantly made to the findings of such research. In recognition of such work, the intention is simply to build upon the vast knowledge already available and by approaching this ethnographic context by way of a slightly different methodological style, so seek to deepen what understanding we already have of life within this particular interpretive collectivity.

By adopting a methodological style which focuses, first and foremost, on members' versions of lived experience, their representations of social reality, leaves

the interpretive door, so to speak, wide open. And, it was this open-endedness which was important in the execution of this work. Through purposefully having no pre-conceived research goals or expectations, no set of hypotheses to test or evaluate, this was bound to be a research adventure of sorts in which, in truth, I had no idea what the end product might even begin to look like. However, it seemed to be a worthy challenge for, having read Shostak's work on the !Kung, I also felt that much seemed to be known about working class Ulster Protestants, about their activities, their living arrangements, their history and beliefs, their rites and celebrations, yet, as Shostak (1982) says of the !Kung:

... Still, I did not feel I knew, except in the most general terms, what these events really meant to the !Kung ... I needed information that could not be observed; I needed the !Kung to start speaking for themselves. (Shostak, 1982: 7)

Questions of Method:

- 1. Delineating the ethnographic context**
- 2. Authoritative 'subjects' of study**
- 3. Getting the story right**
- 4. Practicalities of investigating lived experience**
- 5. Analysis and presentation of members' stories**

By way of introduction it might be suggested that particular questions of method arise and are unavoidable given the rather unique nature and location of the ethnographic context of the Shankill Road. Although, clearly, other ethnographers are not unaware of these methodological issues they, nevertheless, often consider them as less problematic in the conduct of research in conflict-free environments. As such:

- First, a great many questions revolve around, simply, where or how to draw the boundaries of the ethnographic context; that is, what should or should not be included in any plausible description of a way of life which is considered, by both researcher and member, to be relevant and meaningful. Clearly, there exists a readily observable context defined in terms of spatial and temporal parameters in

which members are seen to engage within local spheres of social activity. Such a description of the ethnographic context is familiar territory and, in reference to working class Ulster Protestants, there is a wealth of data describing traditional practices, events, organisations, local activities within such social/spatial collectivities. Questions of defining or delineating the ethnographic context considered here, however, focus upon whether or not such, so-called, objective and observable data is sufficient to provide a full description of members' way of life. Is there a need, perhaps, to complement such descriptions with, for instance, more subject-ive ('subject' oriented) data which aims to give an impression of what it might be like for members, in the practice of their lives, to live the life we are describing. Hence, the first broad range of questions relating to the delineation of the ethnographic context concerns, in brief, issues in the definition of meaningful ethnographic data. If extending or altering the parameters of the ethnographic context, that is looking to other styles of 'data' which are seen as descriptive of a way of life then this, in itself, raises a wealth of questions related to the acquisition of such data, its analysis and presentation.

- Second, extending the parameters of our context necessarily involves a consideration of the status of members located within this context and, as a corollary, the value or weight which an ethnographer gives to members' versions of lived experience, their stories and narrative accounts, in both the acquisition and presentation of ethnographic data. Questions that relate to the status of members - as the subjects or objects of our study - depend upon an appreciation of where or with whom the interpretive authority, or responsibility for presenting an authentic version of lived experience, lies. This set of issues, quite obviously, brings into focus what might be described as the analytical relationship existing between ethnographer and members within the research context. And, questions which this relationships raises necessarily includes a consideration of whether the research relationship should be tilted in favour of seeing members as 'subjects' of study; that is as the authoritative I's and we's who are responsible for articulating

and expressing their cultural lot. Such a relationship between ethnographer and members is clearly different to that maintained in most traditional social research in which the relationship between ethnographer and the research context – the members - is largely tilted toward observation of members as ‘objects’ of study. Here, clearly, the researcher aims to assert and maintain an objective and authoritative distance from what might be described as the subject-ive content of the research context. As Emmerson (1988) notes:

... ethnography’s regard for the voice of the member changes in pendular swings. At certain times and in certain genres the member may be discounted and superseded by the authoritative voice of the ethnographer. In other contexts the member’s voice is given equal or even greater weight than the ethnographer’s ... Our experiences suggest the need to incorporate both poles of the spectrum into the practice of reflexive ethnography. Reflexive ethnographers must attend to transactions with members, including those explicitly framed as verification occasions and those framed more openly, both as sources of information *about* a social world and episodes situated *within* and expressive *of* that world. (Emerson and Pollner, 1988: 194)

The line of argument followed here suggests that there is much to be gained in empowering members as authoritative ‘subjects’ within the research context. Simply shifting the balance of the research relationship between ethnographer and respondent, in and of itself, allows for the acquisition of an entirely different ‘style’ of ethnographic data. And, although such data may, in its’ design, not fit neatly into currently acceptable modes of analysis it is, nevertheless, seen as worthy of academic consideration. So, from the outset it is appreciated that much of members’ lived experience is routinely expressed and articulated in the form of ‘thickly’ descriptive stories which, when tilting the research relationship toward members, forms the bulk of ethnographic data. Much discussion follows, therefore, as to why narrative representations necessarily form an important, if not major, segment of ethnographic data and how, in practice, members meaningfully speak for themselves through the auspices of their stories.

... In order to counter the accusation of being dominant, the interpretive anthropologist disperses authority, establishes a dialogue, lets the “native’s” voice be heard. ... (However) any meaningful interpretation will always carry the interpreter’s stamp. The author will ultimately be the one who actually makes data understandable. (Johannsen, 1992: 71)

Delineating the ethnographic context

To state the obvious, ethnographers are themselves as much members of interpretive collectivities as those whose lives they wish to describe. By virtue of adopting the role of ethnographer, this does not guarantee that one may - in theory or in practice - detach from what it is to be a member oneself; what it is to have acquired and accumulated particular members' procedures for making sense of the world. Of course, much of the practice of social research has been founded upon an assumption that, almost by virtue of assuming the role, the researcher is detached and objective in their academic pursuit and, hence, there is minimal distortion or bias due to their status as 'member'. And, such an assumption has largely determined what is included and excluded as 'data' in the ethnographic context.

It may not always be comfortable or, indeed, easy when undertaking social research to step back from what is generally perceived as the central and pivotal role of ethnographer. To do so involves relinquishing considerable control over the context of research and authority within this context. Primarily, therefore, in order to retain some control and authority within the ethnographic context there has been a tendency to objectify and, thereby, clearly delineate – if not limit - the parameters of what is considered to be the content of the ethnographic context, prior to exposure to this context. Hence, much of what might be considered relevant to a description of a way of life is founded upon the ethnographer's assumptions and expectations as to how that way of life is routinely achieved by members.

Much traditional social research, as such, has been founded upon commonsense assumptions appertaining to how members, as a matter of course, organise and make sense of their everyday lives. We rarely question these assumptions since, being members of interpretive collectivities ourselves, we also routinely and unconsciously make use of similar procedures for seeking information, for explaining the unusual or for simply making sense of events and experiences. It is

because these interpretive procedures appear quite commonsensical and we apply them as a matter of routine –they appear fundamental to the ways we understand and make sense of our lives - that there is a tendency to presume that others will operate similarly.

Indeed, for the most part, there does appear to be an amazing similarity in the ways in which people, irrespective of idiosyncrasies of their cultural lives, do go about the business of making sense of their everyday experiences. For instance, as will be elaborated later, there is a common tendency for members, irrespective of cultural differences, to engage in the practice of narrativisation. Storytelling is considered, in itself, to be one of the primary ways in which members make sense of lived experience for both themselves and for others. So, irrespective of particularities of culture, there appear to be common interpretative procedures which members adopt in a common desire to make sense of events and experiences and, in practice, ‘get the story right’ (Bruner, 1990, 1991).

Recognising the quite routine use of certain interpretive procedures, we might consider how both ethnographers and members similarly seek an understanding of experience through the process of narrativisation; how they quite similarly construct versions of events, re-vamping and re-working these until they feel that they have got the story right. For the most part, getting the story right is achieved through the process of formulating series of questions which are addressed to our selves and others. The answers to these questions, or puzzles, or problems, or confusions, provide knowledge that then either confirms or negates our own interpretation of experience.

This routine, interpretive procedure is akin to seeking scientific-style ‘rules of correspondence’ between one analytical model and another. For, the aim is to find a degree of correspondence between what is actual lived experience - what we do - and

'what we know' and, then, between 'what we know' and 'what others' know'. This question and answer format, seeking some correspondence between 'what we do' and 'what we know' which is, often, a major part of our story telling or narrativisation procedure is what facilitates the process of making sense of the unfamiliar in light of that which is considered familiar.

So, taking this logic one step further, in seeking to understand an unfamiliar way of life - an unfamiliar ethnographic context - commonsense suggests that we need to begin by asking, of ourselves and of others, questions about that which is unfamiliar. Such questions need to be asked in such a way that others' experience will become increasing understandable in terms of that which is already familiar. So, for the most part, quite commonsensically and uncritically, what we do is seek an understanding of others way of life in light of that which we already, from our own experience and knowledge of the world, consider we know. In other words, we use our own knowledge and experience as the yardstick by which to measure or interpret others' lived experience. And, for the most part, this is precisely how traditional ethnography has been achieved, with the ethnographer's prior knowledge providing the interpretive yardstick.

On entering any new social context, as members or in the role of ethnographer, the procedure adopted to make sense of new experiences, strange events, others' rites and rituals, is identical in so far as we look for familiar points of correspondence whereby what is new may be compared and contrasted with what is already assumed to be known. We, in effect, go back and forward looking for the points of correspondence between one set of experiences and another which, of itself, facilitates our understanding of what is going on and whether or not we feel, at the end of the day, we have good fit or a bad fit. So, what is already 'known' from previous experience will largely determine how we approach new and unfamiliar

territory. It will also determine, logically and commonsensically, what sort of questions we may or may not ask of our selves or of others.

The commonsense procedure members adopt, therefore, to make the unfamiliar, in effect, familiar is to qualify and simplify the apparent complexity by relating aspects of 'strangeness' to their own familiar model of experience. In other words, members look for what are commonsense yardsticks, points of correspondence, by which to effectively measure-up and evaluate new and unfamiliar events, activities, responses or relations. Of course these are subjective yardsticks. They are yardsticks of 'meaning' which, given members prior knowledge, are applied to new and unfamiliar aspects of life to render these aspects comprehensible. So, regardless of good intentions we may start with to be methodologically objective there will always be some element of the subject-ive creeping in – by virtue of our own 'member-ship' - which inevitably must influence any interpretation of meaning attributed to our own or other' experience.

Members, it is assumed from the outset, inhabit an interpretive milieu; a social world of relationships and experience which requires interpretation simply in order to be able to describe what is on-going. The central task of ethnographic research, therefore, revolves around this central issue of *interpretation*. For, it is the procedure of interpretation - a procedure both commonplace and commonsensical – which, in practice, precedes description. In saying as much, in seeking to provide a description of a way of life, of an event or a set of experiences, one has first to challenge the principles or procedures of interpretation employed. In other words, an ethnographer, in seeking to as objective as possible, needs to look first to where they are coming from in order to assess or evaluate, with some validity, where they are, or may be, going.

As stated above, it is commonplace that members make sense of experiences by asking questions of themselves and of others. Indeed, much of our understanding of any situation or event is dependent upon what we choose to ask and, indeed, how we may choose to ask it. Traditionally, the practice of ethnography has been conducted along similar lines with the responses to particular sorts of questions, or blocks of questions, being considered the basic data from which to construct a description of a way of life. Of course, what most traditionally crafted ethnography achieves is the re-arrangement of members' responses into what are recognisable and familiar models or descriptions of unfamiliar cultural contexts; that is, the organisation and categorisation of members' responses according to certain expectations or models of how a way of life should, or ought, or is usually, constructed.

For the most part, then, ethnographers are simply making use of quite commonplace members' interpretative procedures in what is considered to be a methodologically disciplined fashion. As they proceed from the familiar to the unfamiliar, they pose questions making that which is unfamiliar more understandable in terms of that which they know. They funnel, in other words, the wealth of possible questions one might potentially ask of that which is unknown and unfamiliar, into that which is seen, by them, to be relevant and, analytically, manageable. And, for the most part, it is a funnelling and selectively limiting procedure since that is the only way, in reality, whereby we might begin to make sense of the potential wealth and density of new experience and data which unfamiliar territory affords. So, to reiterate and for want of better words, ethnographers – as members - attempt to make the unfamiliar, that which is intellectually uncomfortable, into something which is intellectually comfortable for them.

Of course, this interpretive procedure is rarely applied self-consciously. Rather it is much taken for granted as the routine way of understanding anything novel or

strange. And, indeed, how else might we assess and evaluate new experience other than by reflecting upon that which we already know? Yet, in doing this, it is inevitable that whatever understanding of others' lives or experience we arrive at will, in some way or other, be coloured by our own. And, often, it is coloured in ways, the significance of which, we do not appreciate. In fact, we take so much of our own understanding of the way in which experience is, or should, be organised that it is often assumed that others do things for much the same reasons that we ourselves might do them. Simply being members of the same species, irrespective of cultural differences, leads in practice to our making vast and often quite gross assumptions about what others may do, and how, and why, they do it. And, indeed, for the most part of everyday life members go about their business assuming that what has meaning for them will have meaning for others. As members of a common species, as such, it might well be argued that there is a tendency for members to work upon the principle that there are indisputable, basic, conceptual modes whereby all members order their world and attribute meaning to what it is that they may or may not do.

In acknowledging what is no more than a commonsense logic upon which members necessarily operate in order to get on with the business of their lives, leads on to an appreciation of the tendency which we all - as members or ethnographers - have to presume that there are some things in life which are, for example, inherently good and others which are bad, some things which are categorically right and others which are wrong. And, irrespective of any obvious cultural differences in our practice, it is much assumed that members' 'gut' response or feelings toward, for example, violence or shame or love will have much the same meaning attached to them as our own.

What, for instance, are often presumed to be members' responses to certain categories of activities, those generating particular feelings and emotions in ourselves, have been traditionally approached, interpreted and described as if these are

fundamental to the species and, therefore, analytically non-problematic. Hence, there are often presumed to be common members' responses, irrespective of culture, to acts of violence and aggression, to love, to jealousy and so forth. Relatively rarely, as such, have certain sorts of activities and members' responses to them been understood as 'socially constructed' and, thereby, in a real sense culturally dependent.

In the context of violence, for instance, as the work of Chagnon (1988, 1992) illustrates there has been a tendency to intellectually peripheralise violence as a dependent variable. Violent activities or aggressive outbursts have been largely understood, so he comments, as a response to unfavourable situations or circumstances; as something which members do which is reactive rather than proactive. As such, violent or aggressive behaviours have generally not been considered as something which members engage in because they might 'like' to fight, or they might get pleasure or satisfaction from the results or, simply, that particular shows of aggression have become, for one or other reason, locally acceptable ways of doing business. Instead, the academic preference has been to view aggressive and violent activities as, in a sense, socially incorrect forms of behaviour which crop-up when certain social or political conditions are out of kilter; they are perceived as a negative response to a dysfunctional set of circumstances. Hence, the moral of such interpretations revolves around improving social, economic and political circumstances such that violence will be removed from the equation. As Chagnon argues; a somewhat different impression is gained if we begin our analysis from an understanding of violence as a central organising principle in members' social life. Violence, as he suggests, might best be understood as an independent and core variable influencing all aspects of members' cultural lives and, therefore, as central to any description of a way of life which makes sense to members if not, immediately, to us as outsiders.

Even the most basic of emotions, love, anger, shame, fear, it is suggested are likely to have various and distinctive cultural expressions. And, anger or aggression is simply one emotion which, as Heald (1989) discovered amongst the Gisu for instance, is distinctively expressed within different cultural contexts. It is much to do with our common species membership that there is a tendency to presume that others will adopt similar responses to what are generally considered the most basic of emotions and that, as a result, they attribute much the same meaning and understanding to aspects of lived experience as we do ourselves. Most traditional ethnographic research has been designed, so it seems, to explore the culturally 'strange' from a perspective of the species familiar. Rarely, as a result, have ethnographers really challenged assumptions appertaining to how, for instance, that which appears culturally strange, on the one hand, actually merges or interfaces with that which is presumed or taken for granted, on the other hand, as species familiar. It is, perhaps, this analytically fuzzy juncture - often put to one side as a sort of interpretive 'no-man's land' - which needs to be addressed when delineating the interpretive boundaries of one's ethnographic context.

In the practice of much traditional ethnography, it might be argued, there has been a tendency to assume as much or as little on the basis of 'species familiar' as suits our specific research purposes. And, the more that is assumed about the ways in which members interpret their experience and achieve the apparent strangeness of their cultural reality so, in effect, the narrower our working definition of the ethnographic context becomes. Ultimately, by choice, ethnographers might restrict their study to that which is overtly observable as the culturally strange and, simply, interpolate all that which is unobservable; that which, for instance, constitutes members' interpretive medium whereby they, in practice, make sense of experience and decide on appropriate responses.

Choosing to broaden the scope or working definition of the ethnographic context beyond that which is the overt and observable expression of a culture, necessarily involves an expansion into the realms of the subjective. That is, an expansion of the parameters, or boundaries, of study to include a consideration of the ways in which members construct and achieve that objective reality which we, as ethnographers, observe. Shifting the focus in such a way, from a description of the culturally strange in terms of the 'observables' of members' objective reality to an exploration of how members achieve this observable reality, takes us into what has often been, commonsensically and routinely, taken for granted on the basis of a 'species familiar' line of argument. But, when taking so much for granted in our exploration of the culturally strange, as Shostak notes in her study of the !Kung:

... Some of the findings from this expedition were available to me. ... I welcomed the perspective they gave me on the !Kung and their way of life. But ... no matter whom I talked to or what I read, I did not come away with a sense that I knew the !Kung.
(Shostak, 1982: 5)

Looking to the specific cultural context of working class Ulster Protestantism, it might be suggested that so much attention has been paid to this community by both academics and the media that there is a general feeling that little more is left to be said about these people - this ethnographic context - which is not already familiar and well trodden territory. And, indeed, much of what might be defined as members' objective reality - that which may be observed and, in some way or other, measured-up and evaluated for posterity - has been described in many worthy ethnographies referred to in the following chapter. Such accounts of working class Protestant communities describe in some detail many aspects of members' lives; the organisation, rites, paraphernalia and practices of various social, political and religious institutions and, the observable and prevailing 'symbolic' attributes distinctive of this community of working class Protestants including their traditions, their celebrations, their local versions of history.

Clearly, the importance of such studies cannot be underestimated for they contribute vastly to a description of life within this ethnographic context. And, what is obvious, is that only on the basis of such familiarity is it then feasible in the practice of ethnographic research to seek to deepen an understanding of members' lived experience of these events and activities by, in effect, looking to the ways in which members – as 'subjects' – interpretively construct what it is that we observe. In recognising that members may choose to participate in various social, political and religious activities, that they do appear to organise their lives and routines in particular ways, that they seem to have particular expectations about life, and so forth, the question becomes one of how they, routinely and commonsensically, achieve such an observable social reality.

Authoritative 'subjects' of study

Shifting toward a more interpretive appreciation of the ethnographic context clearly involves a subtle change in the way an ethnographer relates to members of the cultural collectivity; that is to an appreciation of members as 'subjects' rather than 'objects' of study. This qualitative shift in members' status effects both the ways in which researchers may expect to interact with members as respondents and the form and content of that which is now considered to be meaningful ethnographic data.

The whole procedure of ethnographic research necessarily takes on a very different guise when considering members as subjects of study who, given a proactive status within the research context, are seen as constructors and voicers of authentic versions of social reality. In this central and creative role as subjects of study - the 'I' - members, like one's self, are viewed as reflective, discerning and contemplative beings capable of, on occasion, self-deception, indulgence, even dissemination. And, such qualities indicate just some of the intellectual acrobatics which members, whether in the role of respondent or researcher, are well capable of displaying within what may be described as an interpretive ethnographic context.

When members of any cultural collectivity, in their species familiar guise, are viewed as actively constructing social reality then, clearly, they may no longer be understood as operating within an interpretive vacuum. Indeed, much of what members do and how they do it, in this view, needs to be considered from the perspective of members who are continually negotiating their understandings, their position, their relationships, within a social complex. Any understanding of what they may do and why they do, therefore, may not rest upon an assumption that there exists a set of definitive rules governing members' responses which, if identified, will enable us to predict with some certainty what they, then, will do and why they may do it at some future date. Rather, an understanding of members' way of life must begin from a consideration of the ways in which they do provide plausible accounts of what it is they 'do' and therefore how they negotiate, in practice, their way through that social complex describing a way of life.

In seeking to deepen our understanding of a way of life the aim is to discover what it essentially means or *feels* like for members - as subjects of study - to live the life which we, as outsiders, might observe. Hence, instead of simply observing what it is that members do and interpolating an understanding from our perspective as observers, the task is to gain an understanding from the point of view of the participants. Such a procedure is, by definition, bound to be subjective for it relies upon members' highly personal and subject-oriented versions of social reality rather than versions that might ever be described as objective or non-participatory. Focusing on members as subjects and empowering them within the research act, of course, begs any number of methodological questions relating to how this dimension of subjectivity might be rigorously approached. For, perhaps, it is one thing to identify a dimension of life which is worthy of study, quite another to study it meaningfully.

So, briefly, when no longer approaching members as objects of study and, thereby, restricting our research vision to that portion of members' lived experience

which is overt, observable and measurable against some known and objective yardstick of experience, interest shifts toward an appreciation of what living such a life as we observe actually means and *feels* like to the participants. We may observe and record much of what members appear to do and, clearly, in the context of working class Ulster Protestantism this has been greatly achieved. But, to do so does not, of itself, imply much understanding of what it actually feels like for members to live the life that we observe and know that they, in some way or other, participate within. In order to gain some understanding of this dimension of lived experience it is necessary, therefore, to empower members within the research act so that they are given the opportunity to articulate, or 'speak', their culture in ways which often in the context of much traditional research are not appropriate.

Clearly, most traditional ethnographic research has centred around members responses of one sort or another; that is what members have had to say about their lives in response to an ethnographers questions. And, it would be the height of presumptuousness to suggest that ethnographers, from whatever background, have not devoted considerable effort to acquiring members' responses and, simply, getting them to 'speak'. However, much traditional research has been presented as if members' contributions - their responses and comments - are the backup to the ethnographers' observations. In other words, members' responses are seen in a supportive rather than central role on the ethnographic stage. In hoping to redress this balance, what is suggested here is that members' accounts; their observations and responses, take the central role. In being so empowered within the research act, members are afforded the opportunity to control and order what it is that they 'speak' about. They may, in effect, choose what to say and how they say it. And, hopefully, this procedure elicits members' subject-oriented impressions - their versions and accounts - of what it is to live the life which, clearly, an outsider may only observe.

In affording members this central role within the research procedure the form and content of ethnographic data alters significantly. And, perhaps, the greatest skill

required of an ethnographer at this stage is 'nerve'; that is the nerve to let members stories unravel in the often convoluted and disparate fashion which they do and not feel the urge to take control. For, whether or not one is comfortable with the form of members' articulations - with their anecdotes, jokes, grumbles, invectives - or considers that much content is insignificant, irrelevant, even contradictory or confused, it is the essence of such research to record members' - the subjective 'I' of stories - articulations since these form the substance of one's ethnographic data.

Casting members in the role of 'subjects', empowering them within the research context in the production of qualitative data, clearly marks a considerable shift away from traditional research practices which were much dependent upon data acquisition in response to pre-structured packages of questions. Such packaging by an ethnographer of what they consider to be, apriori, of importance in members' knowledge and practice is a research style which, in practice, enables one to comfortably deal with that which, as described above, is strange and unfamiliar. Restricting both the style and content of members' responses in ways which are academically familiar - as clipped or fore-shortened answers to set questions - is generally seen as facilitating the acquisition of relevant and objective data which, with some success, might be quantified and generalisations proffered.

Given this emphasis within traditional ethnography, much of members' comments - both the form and content of their stories - has literally been structured-out of the data acquisition process at the beginning through the use of a particular question/answer format, or edited-out at the latter stage of data analysis and the presentation of findings. In other words, much of what members might say, in the ways which are comfortable and familiar to them, has often been seen as analytically cumbersome and somewhat unnecessary in the provision of objective descriptions of a way of life. As Emmerson et al say:

... Ethnographic field research has oscillated between suspicion and celebration of member's representations of social reality. ... Classical approaches often assumed that members did not and could not know social reality as well as the social scientist, and indeed that the mission of the social sciences was to provide a more comprehensive and accurate account than any version members could offer.

Social science knowledge was therefore cast as competitive with members' knowledge and, given its presumed superiority, was to supersede members knowledge. ... The suspicion of members' knowledge reverberates to the methodological level ... (with in part the justification for field research (being) that the researcher could 'see for him or herself' instead of having to take the word of the member. (Emmerson et al. 1988: 189)

It is suggested, therefore, that empowering members within the research process provides them - as subjects, the 'I' of their stories – with the opportunity of expressing what is an insider's understanding and appreciation of a way of life. And, it becomes evident when empowering members in such a fashion that they are capable of giving a variety of versions of lived experience which oscillate between quite objective appraisals of their activities, their traditions, their rites and cultural practices and, in contrast, highly subjective accounts of what some of these things actually mean to them in the context of their lived experience. The former, more objective accounts, resemble in style and content those which are often presented by ethnographers. Members, as is appreciated, are quite capable of casting themselves in the role of *object*, the third party, the he's and she's of their stories. However, the latter versions - often anecdotal and idiosyncratic - tell us much about members' way of life as it is, somewhat individually and subjectively, experienced. Here, of course, members talk about themselves as the experiencing 'subject' – the 'I' – of their self-stories.

Getting the Story Right

By virtue of our social existence and participation in culture, as Bruner (1990) indicates, meaning is rendered public and is shared. Our culturally adapted way of life is founded upon both shared understandings and shared modes of discourse for negotiating differences in interpretation such that:

... what makes a cultural community is not just shared beliefs about what people are like and what the world is like or how things should be valued. There must obviously be some consensus to ensure the achievement of civility. But what may be just as

important to the coherence of a culture is the existence of interpretive procedures for adjudicating the different construals of reality that are inevitable in any diverse society. (Bruner, 1990: 95)

In Bruner's view, it is inevitable that in everyday social life there will be conflicts of interest, shifting alliances, potentially fractious phenomena at every twist and turn of social interaction and what is significant is not how much our different versions of reality separate us but, how much more often they are neutralised, forgiven or excused. Hence, as he observes, there is a tendency to consistently under-value and, as a consequence, under-observe the many ways by means of which members do, in the context of their everyday lives, keep the peace.

It is the ways in which members are seen to construct and keep the peace, which Bruner sees as primarily reflected in members use of narrative, which are of interest in this section:

... In human beings, with their astonishing narrative gift, one of the principal forms of peacekeeping is the human gift for presenting, dramatising, and explicating the mitigating circumstances surrounding conflict threatening breaches in the ordinariness of life.' (Bruner, 1990: 95)

As participants of cultural collectivities, members clearly have a vested interest in 'getting things right' in the context of their everyday cultural lives. They do this by employing various interpretive procedures whereby they seek to 'get the story right' for their self and, thereby, establish some mutual agreement on the meaning of what is going on in the context of everyday life. This is, clearly, a continual process whereby meaning is constantly negotiated and re-negotiated as situations change and events progress. And, for the most part, this is all quite routinely achieved as Bruner says in our desire to 'get the story right'. As Lieblich states:

... People are storytellers by nature. Stories provide coherence and continuity to one's experience and have a central role in our communication with others. ... One of the clearest channels for learning about the inner world is through verbal accounts and stories presented by individual narrators about their lives and their experienced reality. (Lieblich et al, 1998: 7)

From early childhood, so these writers agree, there appears to be a quite fundamental need to both tell our story and get that story right for both our self and, in the context of our interactions, for others. This need is evident in what are described as the presentation of plausible versions of our *self*, our actions and our worlds - our immediate context - for the benefit of our self and significant others. Members achieve such plausible stories - of self, actions and context - primarily through the ability to recount, in the context of joint social discourse, versions of lived experience in a narrative form. Much due to this early use of the narrative form, psychologists such as Bruner, have looked to the importance of the development of narrative skills in formative years and to the continued use of these skills during everyday social discourse. They suggest that, indeed, the development of narrative skills is central to our becoming fit 'for the life of a culture' since, in the absence of these skills members could not, so it is suggested, endure the conflicts and contradictions that social life routinely generates:

... the capacity to render experience in terms of narrative is not just child's play, but an instrument for making meaning that dominates much of life in culture; from soliloquies at bedtime to the weighing of testimony in our legal system. ... Our sense of the normative is nourished in narrative, but so is our sense of breach and of exception.'
(Bruner, 1990: 97)

Perhaps, a key facet of social, rather than any other form of, existence is members' ability to communicate aspects of their *self* - as the subject or the 'I' - and aspects of *others* - as the object or as 'them'. In the main, this communication is quite matter-of-factly and routinely achieved through narrative or story telling procedures employed by members in seeking to make sense of their world, their activities for their self and for others. Members, purposefully, attempt to provide versions or stories of what it is that they or others do which 'fit', in some reasoned way, with what it is that they already know. Such narration, in the form of short anecdotes, rambling sagas, jokes, tales, moans and grumbles, figures prominently in everyday social discourse. And, when talking to members it is quite evident that much of what they do, think and feel about the lives they lead is articulated and recounted in such a narrative fashion.

Members' narrations are, clearly, highly individualistic and subjective versions of lived experience in which descriptions of the *self* and of *others* are fundamentally grounded in the material of everyday existence. The self and others of members' stories do not, as such, exist in isolation nor in a social or contextual vacuum; they do not have an existence which might be conceived of as independent of specific social contexts. Hence, the ways in which members do describe or refer to their self reflects aspects of the social context within which that self is situated. And, logically, the ways in which others are described or referred to in members' stories, reflects the situated social context within which members locate their self in relation to significant others.

Exploring the self as situated or grounded in particular social contexts, as Stanley (1993) notes, is a means of fully explicating that which is the social nature of the self; that is as a self which is both a complexly constructed, conscious and experiencing being and as a self which is, also, objectively locatable within networks of over-lapping patterns of social relationships. It is in broadening our view of the social nature of the 'self' that an ethnographer may arrive at some understanding, given the context of members' narrations, of that self as both 'subject', the conscious and experiencing 'I', and as 'object', that is as objectively located within networks of observable social relationships. Such an understanding, for the most part, may be achieved through an exploration of what are described as members self-stories or narrations. For, what are autobiographical accounts or self-stories describe in some detail the lived experience of a culture. They form, in Ellis (1992: 5) view, 'an interpretive rather than causal story' which demands interpretive rather than causal procedures of analysis. Such self-stories, clearly, constitute personal interpretations of experience as a member of a particular cultural collectivity. They inform the listener of what it means and may *feel* like to participate in events and activities that are, perhaps, known to describe a way of life.

In the same way that members, therefore, attempt to get the story right by weighing-up what may be described as objective representations of a way of life within the context of their subjective appraisals, their self stories, so ethnographers in their desire to fully describe a way of life need to balance objective representations with subjective insight. This, it is suggested, might be achieved through an exploration of members' self-stories that, as Stanley (1993) amongst others notes, illustrate how members arrive at the understandings of their self, of others, their social world, events and activities, which they evidently do. Research in this field of subjectivity - of the 'subject' - demands alternative methods of social investigation; methods which necessarily focus on the collection and interpretation of members' stories for, as Polkinghorne (1988) says:

... The tools being used by the human disciplines to gain access to the self-concept are, in general, the traditional research implements designed for formal science to locate and measure objects and things.

... We achieve our personal identities and self-concept through the use of the narrative configuration, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single, unfolding and developing story. We are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; we are constantly having to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. *Self*, then, is not a static thing or a substance, but a configuring of personal events into an historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be. (Polkinghorne, 1988: 150)

Locating the meaning of members' experience, of their sense of selfhood, of their sense of relationship to others, in this view, involves the gathering of *thick* descriptions of a way of life. Such descriptions are to be found in the context of members' narratives; their stories of events and activities situating them in relation to others within an historical and cultural context. Since members, as Polkinghorne above notes, are conscious and experiencing beings for whom the concept of self is not static, so there is a real sense in which members are constantly seeking to improve on and get their story right. And, much because of this, there is no single or definitive or, so-called, true version of events or activities to be sought and found. Indeed, we can not hope to find within the context of members' self-stories what is, or approximates to, a *right* version of a way of life. Rather, all that may be sought is an

illustration of the ways in which members arrive at what for them are comfortable versions of events and activities. Versions which may, for the sake of simplicity, be described as illustrating ways in which members 'talk' about their self, their relationships, events and activities, from the perspective of their conscious and experiencing self.

In reference to the previous section, it is perhaps useful to reiterate at this point the significance of empowering respondents, as conscious and experiencing subjects, within the research context. As Mishler (1986) notes, when members are empowered in such a fashion, given control within the context of an interview, they do appear to recount episodes of their lives in the form of stories that are often autobiographical in style. Indeed, within such narrations considerable effort is spent on explaining, for the sake of getting the story right, what it is that members have done, or may be doing or hope they might do in some future context and they do this by constant reference to what it is they 'know' as their particular lot of cultural and historical knowledge. In other words members contextualise their activities, feelings and emotions. Hence, as Bruner (1990, 91) describes, when members are viewed as subjects - the creative 'I' or 'self' of their stories - they are seen to have all the capacities for reflection on the past, all the capacities for envisioning alternatives, and all the capacities for escaping, embracing, re-evaluating or reformulating all that is on offer.

Taking the perspective of the subject – the experiencing *self* - is seen, here, as critical in an appreciation of a way of life. The perspective of the self, as Sudnow (1978) says, must be regarded as the starting point for establishing the 'what' and the 'how' of social experience. It is in the recounting of episodes of social experience, that is of particular interactional sequences, that individuals are seen to reveal aspects of both their personal character - of their self as subject - and their social context - their relationship to others and significant social networks. And, what is significant

given this discussion, is that it is the recounting and evaluating of experience which constitutes, as Bruner (1990) describes, the interpretive procedure of story-telling; a procedure which we engage in from childhood and which is the primary means whereby we shape the meanings given to both our self and our activities. The process of 'story-telling', of getting the story right for our self and for others, is a fundamental interpretive device employed by members, whether in their role as ethnographer or laymen, to make sense of lived experience.

To summarise; members make sense of events and experience - what constitutes their entry into meaning - through the use of language and, as Bruner explains, through their ability to make narrative sense of the world about them. Members are, as he reiterates, if not obsessed then decidedly finicky about determining how and when things occurred in their lives. They frequently correct themselves in the context of their narrations as to who did what and when, and what preceded or followed particular events. So it appears that there is a need, clearly exhibited in what all members say and do, to both tell our story and get that story right according to what it is that we know. And, this interpretive procedure – a procedure designed to make sense of the world about us - is evident in its' use from an early age. Children, notably, in their learning of narrative skills spend much time in ordering and arranging events and, thereby, both continually recount their stories and attempt to get them right. In fact children, as Weir (1962) notes, show a particular interest in distinguishing what they consider to be the ordinary or canonical form from that which they perceive or experience as the unusual. And, hence, within their story telling much interest is shown in identifying what is steady and reliable, the mundane or routine, in their lives. This element of the mundane, then, becomes the narrative background - the experiential yardstick - for explicating and making sense of the unusual or exceptional.

Members' story telling, about their self, relationships, everyday lives, may be seen as a means whereby they seek, in an important sense, to re-affirm the ordinary.

So, when exceptional circumstances do occur, it is members' attempts to explain these, to relate these to what they know as the ordinary or mundane, which serves to highlight much that is, in practice, taken for granted in the realm of their everyday lives. Indeed, stories of critical or unusual or extraordinary experiences may be seen as potentially exposing the ordinary, much taken for granted, knowledge and routines of members' lives. Major occurrences, described by Denzin (1989) as 'turning points' or 'epiphanies', appearing to members as both unfamiliar and outside the range of what is perceived as steady and reliable, in practice propel members toward a questioning of the reliability of what it is that they think they know. And, as is evident in their stories, the talking about such exceptional events is often marked with a sense of urgency as members attempt to get the story – their version of experience – right for themselves.

For sociologists such as Denzin, there is much to be discovered through an analysis of members' self-stories of unusual and extraordinary events and occurrences in their lives. Indeed, as he suggests, not only do such stories enable the ethnographer to situate or ground an interpretation of members' experience within a cultural and historical context but they expose much that is taken for granted in members' knowledge of that context. Hence, extraordinary events or turning points that mark members' lives may, as Olesen (1992) says, be considered as instances when:

... our beingness in space was no longer unthinking or assumed but became quite conscious and problematic' (Olesen, 1992: 207)

It is at such times, major turning points in one's life, that members become highly conscious of their vulnerability and acutely aware of their sense of 'self'; that is who and what they are, what they think they know and what they may feel. And, in the context of self-stories, such instances as recounted tend to form landmark experiences around which much of what members have, or want, to talk about revolves with all that went before such an experience being exposed as the much taken for granted, the ordinary and reliable. Hence, the real importance of these stories lies not so much in

matters-of 'fact', or in the objective representation of the reality of the moment, as in members' subjective appreciation of what, for instance, they perceive as the ordinary and reliable, the routine and mundane, in their lives.

Finally, it should be mentioned that accounts we give of ourselves, as Polonoff (1987) notes, are subject to constant re-interpretation and there is no guarantee that the version given today will not be altered in the future. At best, he suggests, we can invoke a coherence theory of truth when it comes to assessing the validity or usefulness of any self-story and this will be referred to later. Suffice it at this point to stress, in Polonoff's words:

... The self is not something one finds oneself constrained to be, but something one makes oneself into. An individual is to some extent free to create the kind of self he will become. But this freedom of self-determination is not freedom to simply make oneself up. (Polonoff, 1987: 53)

By virtue of empowering respondents within the research act, a unique emphasis is placed on the individual and the value of self-stories. And importantly, within this view, the aim is not to discover a narrative truth or definitive version of a way of life for, as Bruner (1990) notes:

... I do not mean an autobiography in the sense of a 'record' (for there is no such thing). I mean, simply, an account of what one thinks one did in what settings in what ways for what felt reasons. It will inevitably be a narrative ... and ... its form will be as revealing as its substance. It does not matter whether the account conforms to what others might say who were witnesses, nor are we in pursuit of such ontologically obscure issues as whether the account is 'self-deceptive' or 'true'. Our interest, rather, is only in what the person thought he did, what he thought he was doing it for, what kinds of plights he thought he was in, and so on. (Bruner, 1990: 119-120)

Much work in this field of interpretive subjectivity is undertaken with a view to contextualising individual's self-stories within a particular social structure or set of social processes. At each stage, however, it is important not to lose sight of the significance of the former, the members' versions, in search of what might be described as the de-humanising, generalising statements of 'public issues'. As such, the procedure for research in this field, in Denzin's (1989) view, involves:

- the doing of ‘existential ethnography’ through the collection and analysis of existentially experienced moments of crisis in a person’s life,
- the recognition that such data is ideographic and therefore each case is unique, and,
- an appreciation of the emic or particularising aspects of the interpretive approach in preference to the etic impulse to abstract and generalise.

Locating the Story: Practicalities of Investigating Lived Experience

Investigating subjectivity, the experiential realm of members as ‘subjects’ of study, requires a research methodology unlike that of traditional positivism and, as Mishler (1986) comments, even those methods most often employed in qualitative ethnographic studies, of observation and interviewing, need to be scrutinised:

... I conclude from the results of these studies (of the traditional interview techniques) that the standard approach to interviewing is demonstrably inappropriate and inadequate to the study of the central questions in the social and behavioural sciences, namely, how individuals perceive, organise, give meaning to, and express their understandings of themselves, their experiences, and their worlds.’ (Mishler, 1986: ix)

What Mishler is suggesting is that how ever naturalistic, rather than positivistic, the approach to research methodology has been, for instance in the design of open-ended or unstructured interviews, there is little evidence that researchers have addressed issues which arise simply because such occasions are a form of social discourse. Interviews of any kind are speech events that are jointly constructed by both interviewer and respondent. As such, the content of any interview, its’ interpretation and analysis, is bound to be effected by either party’s preconceptions as to the nature and content of the discourse. Both researcher and respondent, in other words, have their own agendas and what is considered relevant or what is expected of them will, in some way or other, colour the supposed or intended meaning they, subsequently, attribute to the discourse as it progresses. Given this understanding, so the context or ‘situation’ of the research interview, as a jointly constructed social discourse, cannot be ignored.

In a consideration of research interviews as speech events one may observe, during their progression, the ways in which meaning is negotiated and jointly constructed by the participants during the course of the discourse. The joint construction of meaning is, in essence, achieved through a process of interpretive interaction that is constantly on-going between interviewer and respondent. And, meanings that do emerge - given an understanding that language is indexical - are seen to be neither singular nor fixed but, rather, situation specific or context-bound. Meaning, as such, is grounded in the situation or context within which it emerges and, throughout any discourse, meanings which members do attribute to the content of their 'talk' is moulded and shaped by their very participation within that discourse:

... Meanings of questions and answers are not fixed by nor adequately represented by the interview schedule or by code-category systems. Instead meanings emerge, develop, are shaped by and in turn shape the discourse. (Mishler, 1986: 138)

Given such an understanding of the nature of social discourse, it might be argued that the traditionally structured research interview might not be an entirely appropriate tool for use in interpretive studies of the 'subject'. By the very nature of its design, the research interview, as traditionally structured in a question-answer format, is incapable of redressing issues raised simply because such encounters are, in themselves, speech events with all the attendant qualities of such occasions. Only relatively recently has the role played by the researcher in the construction of meaning during the progress of an interview been challenged.

With a view to investigating subjectivity issues arising due to the social nature of the research setting, the research act, can no longer be ignored and much of what was traditionally considered to be good research practice needs, as Mishler says, to be reconsidered. When no longer seeking to define the ethnographic context and, therefore, what is considered to be valid ethnographic data solely in terms of observable or objective parameters, the emphasis shifts toward the subjective realm; that is to a view of members as creative, conscious and experiencing 'subjects' of

study. This shift in research focus, of itself, suggests that the balance of responsibility for the production, interpretation, even analysis and presentation, of what is considered to be sound and relevant ethnographic data will alter. Indeed, this is precisely what occurs. For, whereas within the traditional interview format much responsibility for the structure and content of the interview lay with the researcher, in the study of the subjective realm responsibility shifts, much of its own accord, toward the respondent.

Empowering respondents within the research context, in practice, provides them with the opportunity to speak about aspects of their cultural experience in ways that are, discursively, familiar and comfortable to them. When no longer seeking to control or retain authority within the research act through controlled observations or structured interviews, as Riessmann (1993) suggests, the act of research itself qualitatively shifts to a sensitive and open-ended discourse in the context of which culture is seen to 'speak itself' through an individual's self-story. This shift from structured interview format to an open-ended form of social discourse is subtle. It has profound consequences within the research setting as Shostak discovered:

... Talking to people and asking questions that encouraged them to talk openly to me became the focus of my fieldwork.

... I encouraged the women to initiate conversations, since the way one memory led to another seemed to be of potential importance. I interrupted as little as possible, primarily to ask for clarifications. (Shostak, 1982: 7, 21)

When the research intention is to gain members' impressions of social reality, that is insider views of an otherwise observable social reality, the logic underlying such research indicates that one should aim not to pre-define or structure the content one hopes to discover. Of course, as members themselves, researchers may not disengage entirely from any such pre-conceptions as to what is significant or meaningful within a particular context. But, even so, it is essential that they remain self critical and aware of their potential influence throughout the conduct of, as Douglas (1985) comments, joint dialogues between themselves and respondents.

The research act which Douglas envisages as appropriate for an investigation of the subjective realm of social experience is described as a joint dialogue in which there is an continual recognition that this is, indeed, a conversation with all the attendant qualities of mutual and joint conversations in everyday life. From the outset there needs be an understanding on the part of the researcher that the sort of data one is after cannot be apriori structured. Rather it is data which is seen to be *emergent* during the course of joint discourse as members, literally, give voice to their experiences, proffer explanations of their self, contemplate their relations with others, and talk about what events and occurrences have meant to them.

As social researchers mentioned here have illustrated, in the context of their own work, acquiring data of this sort which is often intensely personal and emotive is a sensitive task requiring much time and skill. The type of data one is after suggests that authority for its production, form and content, must rest with respondents who, one trusts, will take on the narrative role of 'hero' within the context of their own self-stories. The researcher role, in this view, shifts subtly from questioner to listener and, on occasion, to prompt. But, for the most part, what is essential in the production of such data is that researchers approach their interviewing creatively:

... Creative interviewing is purposefully situated interviewing ... Rather than denying or failing to see the situation of the interview as a determinant of what goes on ... creative interviewing embraces the immediate, concrete situation, tries to understand how it is effecting what is communicated ... and digs below our tactics to conceal ... all of which are accepted in the normal run of communication. (Douglas, 1985: 22)

In adopting Douglas' advice, the research method becomes one in which researcher and respondent engage in joint discourse, a conversation, within a situated context. Neither the context nor the participants may be ignored when considering the import of content generated throughout such discourse which, as Ellen (1984: 227) suggests, in explorations of the realm of the subjective is bound to involve members 'intensely personal experience'.

So, given the type of data sought and the context of its' production, it is apparent that research in the realms of the socially subjective dimension may not be conducted in an entirely detached and objective manner. Indeed, it might be suggested that the very outcome of such a research task is, to a degree, dependent upon the construction of a personal relationship between researcher and respondent which will facilitate the progress and quality of the discourse. Of course, as Ellen (1984) notes, interviewer detachment is something that should be aimed for. However, this does not imply an emotional distancing so much as a need to maintain an intellectual appreciation of the occasion as a jointly constructed conversational event for the disclosure of often intimate, sensitive, moments in a person's life.

From the outset, therefore, the research occasion - call it an interview, or joint discourse, or conversation - is to be recognised as a contextualised speech event. An event which is regulated by norms of appropriateness and relevance which are, as Mishler says:

... part of the speaker's shared linguistic competencies as members of a community.
(Mishler, 1986: 137)

And, regarding questions of representativeness and sampling, as Shostak discovered, finding appropriate respondents - that is those with whom we might participate in such an event - is as likely to be much a matter of the chance discovery of individuals with whom we might establish such a relationship, as described by Ellen above, as the outcome of any purposeful research design:

... At last, I thought about Nisa again. I wasn't sure I could trust her, but something about her held my interest. I thought about how patient she had been with me and how important it had been to her that I understand. She had also been open and warm, even entertaining; and she did say there was much more to tell.

In Nisa, I finally found what I had been looking for. After she understood the requirements of the interviews, she summarised her life in a loosely chronological order; then, following my lead, she discussed each major phase in depth.

Nisa and I "worked very well together." ... We were pleasant and friendly and our rapport was easy. She had a determination to make each interview work and seemed to derive considerable pleasure from the entire process. Although she occasionally asked for direction, she led the way most of the time. (Shostak, 1982: 39-40)

Finally, when considering traditional research concerns, questions of validity, objectivity, representativeness, sampling and so forth, it is important to note that such considerations simply change 'shape' when investigating subjectivity. Research procedures, as Denzin (1989), Douglas (1985), Ellen (1984) et al indicate, are as rigorous in the study of members' subjectivity, the interpretivist dimension of social life, as they are in studies of the overt and observable dimension of social life. Hence, simply because one shifts the focus of study away from that which, traditionally, implies quantification and objectivity does not mean that one is bound, within the context of interpretivist research methodology, to be any less rigorous, systematic and objective than in any other form of social research.

Presentation and Analysis of Members Stories

Adopting a research style in which respondents are encouraged to lead the way in conversational-style interviews tends to result in vast recordings of members' self-stories and recollections which, in the context of traditional styles of anthropological and sociological analysis, have presented persistent problems:

... it remains true that the more the informal interview is controlled by the informant, the less the ethnographer knows how to deal with it ... there is little sense of what to do with such material beyond fairly straightforward presentations of the interview as narrated by the informant ... life histories are valued for their person-centred, holistic displays of principles otherwise discussed more abstractly in ethnographies, but there is not much discussion of how to make these links explicit.
(Agar & Hobbs, 1982: 2-3)

Given this on going debate, the discussion here might begin with a consideration of what constitutes the narrative - or story - content of such open-ended, conversational-style data as described above and what is its' status. Questions, for instance, have regularly been raised as to whether it is appropriate to consider members' responses in their entirety as, for instance, stories which reflect members' 'life as told' rather than 'life as observed' or, perhaps, 'experienced'. Is there an analytical, or ontological or, perhaps, other distinction, to be made here? In adopting the 'story metaphor' approach, Riessman (1993) attempts to overcome this philosophical minefield through a consideration of the entire interview response as a contextualised whole

which, in itself, is evidence of the way in which members structure and order their experience. Such an entry into the analytical appreciation of interview content, she suggests, enables the ethnographer to:

... see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives ... in other words ... (to consider) ... Why was the story told that way? (Riessman, 1993: 2)

Clearly, there is an implicit understanding here that narratives are, in themselves, an organising principle for human action as Bruner (1990), above, suggests. Hence, the narrative or story-telling procedure is seen as a means of organising thoughts, both for one self and for others, about what it is we know, we think, we do, and feel. In principle, Riessman is suggesting that when faced with recordings of often long and detailed members' accounts, analysis is best initiated through a general consideration of the organisation and structure of the whole. At least, one should look first to what are considered to be whole narrative sections within the account in order to discover the sort of order and structure members impose on the flow of experience.

It is evident in members' statements that, when empowered within the context of research and talking at length about events and experiences, they make direct and indirect claims about their personal and social identities and, in various degrees, place an order or structure on what they describe as the personal experience of their culture. In recognising such and having amassed a wealth of such data, the analytic task is to draw out and expose:

- First, whatever claims members appear to be making about their personal and social identities, that is 'who' they think they are and where they place themselves in relation to others and,
- Second, the ways in which members appear to order, that is attribute a relevant or meaningful structure, aspects of their lived experience.

The analytic task, as such, begins with an appreciation of the ordering that members place on their experience - of their 'self', of others and relationships, of certain activities, of events - as evidenced in way in which they address certain issues and in the way their narrative, as a whole, is seen to progress. To what, for instance, do members give priority? Are events talked about chronologically? Who features as significant in personal stories? How do they refer to others? What do they like and how do they feel about certain issues? And so forth. Such an appreciation, as Riessman reiterates, affords primacy at all times to the human agency and imagination that is evident in such narrative data. And, by systematically approaching densely descriptive, often highly personal, narrative data - looking for the order which members appear to place on their experience - as Mishler (1986) continues, so consideration is given to questions of coherence and continuity in members' accounts, to their authenticity and, in respect of basic semantics, to what meaning members may, or may not, attribute to various episodes of experience.

Much of the initial stage of narrative analysis is, therefore, simply concerned with the systematic disclosure of ways in which particular members appear to organise their experience in the context of their accounts. However, in having exposed interesting facets or aspects of this ordering, there is a need to consider issues relating to questions of 'meaning' in the context of members' accounts. That is, looking to where 'meaning' is located in what it is that members say and how we might assess and evaluate what is and is not, therefore, meaningful in members' 'talk'. Mishler, in an extensive consideration of such questions, begins by reference to the use of Structural Analysis as illustrated in the early work of Labov and Waletzky (1967). Labov et al's approach, considered to be somewhat of a landmark in narrative analysis, sees meaning in personal accounts of experience as embedded in and strictly determined by the order and the form of the narrative sequence. Hence, their approach to analysis centres on how:

... units of linguistic expression are connected to one another, principally through a relation of temporal order. (Mishler, 1986: 12)

Labov's style of narrative analysis is one of systematically relating the sequence of clauses in the narrative to the sequence of events inferred from the narrative. It is a procedure whereby verbal sequences are matched to actual events suggested in the content of the narrative. Members' accounts, thereby, are seen as representing a 'particular model of the relation between language and reality' in which, notably, the temporal ordering of events and sequences is considered to be a necessary and central organising feature.

As a number of critics have noted, the immediate limitation in using only this style of analysis is that narrative accounts include much more than sequences of temporally related speech. Indeed, most narrative accounts are organised according to both a temporal criterion and in terms of a criterion of coherence. Hence, the narrator's intention is not only to produce an account which is, in their view, factually and sequentially accurate but, also, an account which is perceived as coherent. In reference to Bruner's suggestion that the procedure of narrativisation is one of the primary ways in which members make sense of experience and events so the importance of this criterion of coherence becomes self-evident. Also, it is noted, Labov et al made little concession to the context of the story-telling occasion as a speech event. Indeed, little attention is paid to members' stories as joint productions in which the story teller is aware of and influenced by the context; by their audience.

In recognition of the importance of coherence as an organising principle in members' accounts Agar and Hobbs (1982) suggest ways in which an 'Ideational Function' may be introduced into narrative analysis such that both the temporal ordering and ideational content of a text are jointly considered. The ideational content, in Halliday et al's terms, constitutes predominant themes and ideas that run through an account. These, it is suggested, may be considered in terms of a criterion

of coherence that is clearly distinguish from the cohesion, or relevance, or understandability of an account. In brief, the internal coherence of an account implies a shared sense of 'talk'; that is of ideas being tied together. And, it is this tying together of the ideational content that constitutes the Ideational Function of a narrative account. The element of coherence is seen as denoting, in this context, what is described as an aesthetic holding together of the elements of a story. It is considered, quite straightforwardly, to be the overall sense of unity, or continuity, or general 'fit' of narrative elements within a member's narrative account.

Much has been written which further addresses the question of coherence in members' narrative accounts. In summation, Mishler suggests that the overall coherence of an account is, in practice, characterised by virtue of a number of both causal and temporal 'coherence relations' between ideas and / or events referred to in the narrative. Analysis of accounts in terms of coherence, therefore, needs to take into consideration a number of factors including:

- an evaluation of the appropriateness or effectiveness of an utterance in light of the overall goal of the discourse,
- an assessment of the links made between what is known and what is subsequently introduced into the discourse and,
- an appreciation of the various forms of expansion and elaboration used by the respondent during the narration.

According to these criteria, in an analysis of self-narratives so-called 'righter' versions, in Polonoff's (1987) view, are those that are seen to order their constituent elements with greater overall coherence. In contrast, narratives which are incoherent are those which may be discarded as simply 'wrong' and which he, for instance, likens to a kind of 'self-deception' or 'delusion'.

In Polonoff's view, it is necessary to look beyond elements of internal coherence; that is beyond the general 'fit', or continuity, or unity of ideas running

through an account, for proof of either the validity or authenticity of that account given the broader context of its' production. An account, it is suggested, may be entirely coherent in terms of both form and content yet, its very coherence may prevent its 'wrongness' being recognised by either or both narrator and audience. Examples Polonoff uses to illustrate this disjuncture between analytical coherence and the validity or authenticity of an account, include self-deceptive versions of the self. Such versions, it is suggested, are often convincing because of their apparent temporal and ideational coherence. Hence, they are accepted, believed, and responded to by both the narrator and others as if they are valid and authentic representations. In such instances, quite clearly, criteria other than coherence need to be employed in evaluating the validity or authenticity of an account.

With particular reference to self-stories, Polonoff suggests the use of analytical criteria that challenge the *believability*, *liveability* and *empirical adequacy* of members' accounts:

- First, the *believability* of a self-story is something which is often not self-evident in terms of what it is that people actually say. Accounts may be entirely coherent but they may not conform to versions which others, within the same cultural collectivity or social grouping, form of themselves nor, indeed, versions which others might form of the narrator. As such, there has to be some general 'fit' between how a member describes their self and how others, within the same cultural milieu or social grouping, might describe their self in order that the former version is seen to be, in some fashion, credible or believable.
- Second, the criterion of *liveability* is somewhat different in that it concerns what an individual, within the context of their self-story, suggests they are in light of what they have done, are doing, or say they will do in the future. Polonoff suggests that a self-story is not only a construction of the past but a commitment to future actions such that:

... To have ordered the self in a certain manner requires that one continue to act in a way which coheres with this ordering. (Polonoff, 1987: 50)

- Third, in considering the *empirical adequacy* of a member's story it is noted that, during the telling of self-stories much may be discarded, forgotten or glossed over, yet there remains a set of what Polonoff refers to as 'primitive experiences' which are unforgettable, recurrent, learning and emblematic. These experiences, in his view, form 'atomic units' of a narration and, although they do not dictate particular orderings within accounts, they set boundaries as to what can count as the right ordering. Any comprehensive analysis, therefore, must focus on the content of a member's story in order to delineate what appears to be the chain of significant events. And, in light of this chain or sequencing, the analyst needs to consider whether the narration exhibits an empirical logic. In other words, it is actually possible that what the narrator suggests has happened, both in time and space, could have happened given what we, the audience, know to be empirically feasible.

While issues relating to the coherence, validity and authenticity are clearly pertinent to an analysis of the content and form of members' stories, attention also needs to be addressed, at the analytical stage, to the social context of members' storytelling. It has been stressed throughout this section that research interviews are occasions of joint social discourse during which meanings are negotiated and some mutual understanding fostered. As such, attention must be paid to what Mishler, for example, refers to as the Interpersonal Function in narrative analysis. This function concerns both:

- the nature of the context within which accounts are given, and
- the nature of the relationship between researcher and respondent.

Various studies have focused on the import of the Interpersonal Function in narrative analysis and in particular Paget (1982, 1983), in her study of doctor/patient relations, takes special note of the role and influence of the interviewer in the acquisition of members' narrative accounts. She is concerned to:

'... explore in-depth interviewing as a science of subjective experience' (Paget, 1982: 67)

Given this intention, Paget is keen to empower respondents within the context of the interview such that they have as much control as possible over the pacing, the introduction and the development of content. The use of such focused interviewing is considered by Bell (1983) to fundamentally situate or ground narration in what is described as the interplay between dual roles of narrator/respondent and listener/questioner. Since the actual context is, here, afforded primacy, so the relationship between interviewer and respondent in the joint production of the narration cannot be ignored. Indeed, in the analysis of members' responses, attention necessarily is directed to the ways in which this relationship, the social context of the interview, may have effected the content and form of one's data.

In conclusion:

Having, although briefly, considered salient issues in narrative analysis it is clearly evident that there are bound to be considerable analytic problems arising in any attempt to organise, present, or simply make sense of the wealth of highly subjective accounts which form the bulk of ethnographic data in this context. However, knowing the sort of problems which one is likely to encounter does not, of itself, lessen the potential value of undertaking a study focusing on members' subjective accounts of experience in seeking to deepen an understanding of a cultural collectivity.

The real value of such studies lies in what has been described as their *rootedness* in time, place and personal experience and in what Riessman (1993) refers to as the way in which culture 'speaks itself' through an individual's story. This

notion of culture being relayed through the auspices of members' stories and 'talk' is, perhaps, most aptly expressed in the words of Shostak:

... Talking about experiences and telling stories is the main source of aesthetic pleasure for the !Kung. With no written expression, people sit together and talk, often for hours.

... As with any skill, some people are more proficient at such narration than others. Among the women I interviewed Nisa stood out. She has an exceptional ability to tell a story in a way that was generous, vibrant, and moving. Her sensitivity and skill made her stories larger and more important than the details they comprised. Sometimes they captured the most subtle and profound experiences in human life; sometimes they revealed a confused human entanglement that was all too recognisable. That was the value that her narrative had for me, and the reason it became so compelling. (Shostak, 1982: 39)

In terms of the analysis of members' narratives, it is evident that much attention in the social sciences - primarily in conversation and discourse analysis - has been paid to the work of Labov et al. In some contrast to the internal analysis of forms and content of members' speech, the Personal Narratives Group (1989) pay considerable attention to the location of members' stories within multi-layered social and historical contexts. They seek an understanding of members' accounts in terms of the historical moment of their telling and the social, ethnic, class and gender relations of those involved. As Riessman (1993) explains, her sympathies tend to lie with this latter approach to narrative interpretation primarily because 'the text is not autonomous of its context'.

It is the view, here, that in the analysis of any members' stories there is a basic need to situate interpretation and be seen to connect, within the analytic procedure, people to situations through some form of spatial and temporal mapping. In other words, there is some need to locate members' stories within the historical and social context of their telling. Hence, when it is evident that local groupings within a particular cultural collectivity have developed their own mannerisms, styles, or *idelect* - special language (Denzin, 1989) - for whatever reason, then, one's interpretive approach must reflect a general understanding of the context of these local cultural styles of behaviour or language, and their meaning for respondents. This emphasis on *situating interpretation* brings into sharp focus what might be the nature

of the relationship between the investigator and the field. This relationship is considered, by Strivers (1993), to be fundamentally a subject-to-subject connection; a connection in which a sharp distinction between researcher and subject can not, in practice, be drawn. And, in her view, there is ultimately 'no hope of achieving unbiased knowledge' or knowledge of a cultural context which is 'unaffected by researcher's constitutive assumptions'.

When focusing on individual accounts, members' self-stories, particular occasions of joint social discourse, there is always a danger of reifying linguistic structures and generalising or building inappropriate inferences from case studies. While acknowledging that this is as an inherent problem in any interpretive analysis of members' statements and accounts it is, nevertheless, important to bear in mind that issues concerning the historical truth or objectivity of particular members' versions of events and activities are not considered central nor pertinent to this style of research activity. In investigating subjectivity, it is taken for granted that members will often, as a matter of some routine, construct very different versions of the same events and activities. The task, therefore, is not to discover a definitive version of events, a version that is both objective and correct according to some observable or measurable yardstick. Rather the task is to illustrate how members, in accounting for experience, actually arrive at certain common understandings which they so evidently do. In Bruner's view this, essentially, involves a consideration of how members make use of the narrative procedure as an interpretive tool for making sense of the lived experience of a particular way of life.

Anthropologists, such as Turner (1980), have never under-estimated the power of narrative as a way of articulating and resolving very fundamental human problems. As he states, narrative is:

... the supreme instrument for binding the 'values' and the 'goals'... which motivate human conduct into situational structures of 'meaning'... we must concede it to be a universal cultural activity, embedded in the very centre of the social drama.'
(Turner, 1980: 167)

While not wishing to comment on whether or not the narrative form is to be understood as such a 'supreme instrument' it is, nevertheless, of considerable interest that members' stories and self-stories do appear so regularly in our everyday social discourse. Indeed, they crop up with such regularity that it seems highly likely, as Mishler argues, that this form of social discourse is:

... one of the natural cognitive and linguistic forms through which individuals attempt to order, organise and express meaning. (Mishler, 1986: 106)

Much ethnographic data unavoidably takes the form of long tracts of speech involving members' personal recollections, biographical details or anecdotal stories. In seeking to standardise responses, quantify and analyse data in ways much akin to the natural sciences, social scientists have not always been impressed with such thickly descriptive, subject-ive responses to their questions. Hence, much of this form of data has been discarded once particular quotes have been extracted in order to illustrate more general or quantifiable results. In Cicourel's (1973) terms, such forms or styles of qualitative data simply did not stand the test of 'measurement' and, given the lack of what appeared to be any systematic procedures for its interpretation, presented researchers with more problems than it seemed to be worth.

In more recent years, however, much attention has been paid to styles of narrative analysis and, as Riessman is at pains to point out, for the systematic study of personal experience and meaning. Even so, it must be born in mind that:

... narratives do not speak for themselves (nor) provide direct access to other times, places or cultures' (Personal Narratives Group, 1989: 264)

Indeed, in the same way that raw experience demands interpretation, so members' narrative accounts need to be interpreted. The analytical procedure, therefore, is one of interpretation in which the intention, clearly, is not to discover some objective truth hidden within:

... When talking about their lives, people lie some times, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they *are* revealing truths. These truths

don't reveal the past 'as it actually was' aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences.

... Unlike the truths of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the *contexts* that stage their creation and to the world views that inform them. Sometimes the truths we see in personal narratives jar us from our complacent security as interpreters 'outside' the story and make us aware that our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation and shapes the meanings we derive from them. (Personal Narratives Group, 1989: 261)

Context: Introducing the Working Class Ulster Protestant Community

To many on the mainland, Ulster is an obstinate bugger of a place, peopled at best by folk who don't know what's good for them, at worst by blood-lusty fanatics. ... To the English, many of whom seem to understand no greater loyalty than an attachment to a favourite Spice Girl, Ulster passions are a dark mystery. But then, they make little attempt to understand them. ... If you are poor, unemployed, and live in a country rotted with violence and universally pitied, allegiance to some historical cause can be all you feel you have. (Aitkenhead, The Guardian: 2.5.1997)

The Location of the Shankill within this 'obstinate bugger of a place'

'The Shankill starts at Peter's Hill at the bottom of the Shankill and stops, I'd say, at Tennent Street. Then you went on up to Woodvale and Oldpark. So, from Belfast centre you used to walk straight up the Road and the shops were on each side and everybody was talking. You nearly stopped at every other shop for you'd meet somebody you knew. You could have walked on up to the Park. People walked up to the Park on a Sunday night and met everybody. You had a yarn. There was a lad singing and all. It was good.

Urney Street, Conway Street, Argyle, that was the Nick. On the other side was the Hammer. It was because of Nixon Street, ran across from Wilton Street down to Conway, that they called it the Nick. Nixon Street was where everybody all stood about. The bars, the corner shops and all were in those wee streets. And, the other side of the Shankill Road, down from Agnes Street, was the Hammer. Used to be Beresford Street in the Hammer where they had another big arch. That used to be a long street ran across from the Shankill Road to the Crumlin. Then, there was Brown Square, around about Boyd Street, where they always had a big Arch at the Twelfth. Brown Square was down at the bottom where the Shankill started, where the motorway link really is now. I think there's still a couple of old terraces.

Then up above Agnes Street you've got Snugville Street and Berlin Street. And, at the top there's what used to be the Shankill cemetery. It was a cemetery then not a rest park like it is now. People used to go there with their flowers and there was always plenty of activity about it. Just a few old people would go up and sit in it now. There's a few headstones but that's all. That finished off the Shankill where the cemetery was. You see, then you have the Woodvale Road.' (Shankill Resident: Recorded Interview, 1998)

The Shankill Road lies several hundred meters to the west of Belfast city centre. It is an inner-urban area aptly described, as is the neighbouring locality of the Falls, as still

suffering from 'extreme redevelopment blight and social disruption as the old housing is slowly being knocked down and replaced with new rows of houses.' (Sluka, 1989: 43) Prior to the 1970s and the onset of major redevelopment of the Shankill district, the Shankill Road community was a densely populated locality comprising street upon street of traditional 'wee kitchen' houses. It was, until redevelopment, perhaps best described as a row-house ghetto in which densely constructed rows of small, identical, red-brick terraced houses were built back-to-back with narrow streets, often less than twenty feet wide, between. Throughout the early nineteenth century there had been tremendous industrial expansion in Belfast and the construction of these row-house ghettos, clustering along major thoroughfares radiating out from the city centre, satisfied the immediate need to accommodate a burgeoning population movement into the city. In the Shankill, Falls and Crumlin Road districts - the Shankill-Falls-Crumlin triangle of north and west Belfast - as on the east side of the river near the shipyards, rows of such houses were cheaply, given the availability of durable bricks, erected for workers in the linen mills and engineering plants such as Mackies on the Springfield Road.

... The very earliest memories were in Shankill Road in B. Street. There were exactly 160 houses in B. Street. It was named after a Lord, but there was nothing very lordish about it!

Remember this was a two bed, two up, two down house, toilet in the back yard (and) when you went into the living room of the house there was a staircase right up the side, going up to the bedrooms. There was no real privacy in those houses.

My mother was a terribly house proud person. You've heard of the 'wee palaces' on the Shankill Road, well ours was a little palace to my mother. And, I think she made it like that for me. I was an only child of course (but) my grandmother had had eleven children and seven survived. So there would have been very large families about. (Shankill Resident: Recorded Biography, 1996)

... I started work in Mackies at sixteen and served my time there, on the Springfield Road. It was predominantly a Protestant engineering company ... I remember looking down the street after my father; he used to come up from Mackies. He worked in Mackies too. (Shankill Resident: Recorded Interview, 1996)

... There you were, taken away from school at fourteen. It was the leaving age for school and the age you started work. So you left school on the Friday and you went to work on the Monday. The first job I had was in 1953 when I was fourteen, it was sort of way £1 and 12 shillings a week and you gave all that money into the house. ... My mother would have looked after my grandmothers house while she was out working in the mill ... she also looked after the rest of the cousins while their mothers worked in the mill. (Shankill resident: Recorded Interview, 1995)

It might be noted that living conditions for industrial workers in Belfast during the nineteenth century compared quite favourably with most working class districts in other major British cities. And, there was a considerable population shift from Glasgow, for instance, to Belfast during this period primarily due to the availability of what were considered to be decent houses. Such descriptions of 'decent', even so, are relative to the period for it is estimated that by the mid-nineteenth century conditions were becoming very crowded and insanitary and that, next to Dublin, Belfast had the highest incidence of cholera and typhoid fatalities. With reference to the Shankill, in particular, in the report of a survey conducted by Methodist lay ministers in 1888, this locality is described as, 'the lowest level of urban society' in which the people are 'debased and debauched to the last degree.' Missionary work undertaken in the Shankill district by the Belfast Central Mission, 1883, is graphically described as 'work in slumdom', with volunteers said to 'descend into hell every Saturday afternoon.' (Maguire, 1993: 88-9)

Allowing for some improvement in sanitation, housing conditions in the Shankill remained much the same throughout the first half of the twentieth century. And, not until after the second world war was a special Housing Committee set up and the 1956 Housing Act officially named Belfast City Corporation responsible for slum clearance and a programme of inner-city development. During the 1960s, a joint working party of city and government officials produced the first comprehensive report on redevelopment of inner-city 'slums' such as the Shankill. This report led to the construction of several blocks of flats – similar in style to those being constructed in other British cities - in both the Shankill and the neighbouring Falls. This proved to be an expensive experiment in new styles of living for both the Turf Lodge flats on the Falls Road and the so-called 'Weetabix' flats on the Shankill, built in the latter 1960s, were disliked by members of both communities and had to be demolished within a few years. At this time, it is estimated that there were some 29, 000 houses, 24% of the total housing stock, in Belfast that was unfit for occupation. Clearly, a

considerably proportion of the housing stock of the Shankill-Falls-Crumlin triangle came within this category. Reference to socio-economic conditions in the Shankill-Falls-Crumlin triangle are well documented by such authors as O'Hanlon (1853), Wiener (1972, 1978), Boal (1974, 1978, 1982), Maquire (1993), Campbell (1976), Barton (1989), Fisk (1975), Kennedy & Ollerenshaw (1985), Cunningham (1991).

Various administrative developments on both local and central government fronts subsequently led to the founding of what is still, today, called the Housing Executive and it is interesting, perhaps, that as early as 1972 the chairman of this new initiative commented:

... The authors of these schemes failed to learn from the bitter experiences of redevelopment in Britain; and it is arguable that the widespread demolition that preceded these sweeping and ill-thought-out schemes contributed largely to the violence of the sectarian strife which marked the Troubles. (Maguire, 1993:172)

As one Shankill resident recollects of these early days of redevelopment:

... They made us move. We had no choice. Nobody had any choice. They just said they were knocking down the houses and you were lucky you got a new place. It was all very sad. Sure, we were the last to leave the street (Argyle) and the bulldozers came and bulldozed everything down. Started at the bottom.

... The government had all to do with that. It wasn't the people. It was the same in the Falls too. You know, then, there was no rowing; a bit of bantering at each other but that was about it. People came from the Falls and shopped in the Shankill. The poor people up the Shankill, well there was no difference in the working class people of the Shankill or the people of the Falls. Like they all worked in the mills. All had to do it. All had the same type of houses. Everybody had to work in the mills because there was no other work for you and your mother needed the money to keep the wolf from the door.

... But, the change in twenty years was very sad. Very, very sad. But, then, in a way who wanted to live in a damp house full of vermin? They weren't good houses. They were full of everything; slugs and all. And, there's a better standard of living on the Shankill now. Better housing. But it was a high price to pay for better housing. (Shankill Resident: Recorded Interview 1998)

It is clearly the case that since the 1970s housing conditions have much improved within the Shankill-Falls-Crumlin triangle and, notably within the Shankill this has led to an enormous population movement away from the Shankill Road to outlying housing developments in Glencairn, Springmartin, Glengormley, Rathcoole and so forth. Indeed, members of the old Shankill Road community were offered what to them, at least, were sizeable cash incentives to move out of their old terraced houses

with the minimum of fuss. A cash payment and the promise of an inside bathroom, an extra bedroom, perhaps a small garden, was the incentive most needed to make the transition from the familiar row-house ghetto to such large and impersonal housing estates as Rathcoole. It is estimated that the resident population of the Shankill Road – including outlying districts – fell by approximately two-thirds during the early period of redevelopment and this, undoubtedly, had a serious knock-on effect on local businesses, local employment, leisure facilities and community initiatives.

Clearly, problems arising from rapid and, as often described, aggressive redevelopment (Weiner, 1972, 1978) exacerbated social and economic problems already existent within the Shankill district. For, as must be acknowledged, during the greater part of the twentieth century this was a community in both social and economic decline. The so-called hey day of industrial development and expansion in Belfast had reached its peak in the latter nineteenth century and by the 1920s and 1930s, what with a world-wide economic depression, high unemployment and all its attendant economic and social problems were clearly manifest amongst Belfast's working classes. Various local commentators; Winifred Campbell, Sam McAughy, amongst others, describe conditions for many working class members during the first half of the twentieth century as of appalling levels of poverty and great social hardship. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, and until well after the Second World War, many were living in over-crowded, damp and crumbling houses which Dr.T.Carnwath (1941) described as 'mere hovels, with people living in indescribable filth and squalor.' It is worth noting that during the 1930s, 27% of Belfast's insured workforce were unemployed for extended periods and so lost their eligibility for unemployment benefit. These members were, thereby, reduced to seeking help from the Belfast Board of Guardians, the Guardians of the Poor Law; a body that was notorious at the time for lacking compassion and empathy for the plight of those – whether Protestant or Catholic - seeking assistance.

Whole families in the Shankill–Falls–Crumlin triangle were literally ‘wiped out’ during the latter 1920s and 1930s through dire poverty and illness. As Winifred Campbell recollects in the following extracts:

... Short term unemployment was common enough. It simply meant a tightening of the belt for a while ... As the months stretched into years, people began to despair. Every possible economy became the way of life. ... (As such) ... any event, happy or sad, became the business of the street and was openly discussed. Advice was freely given, invited or not. Doors were left open ... help, such as it was, was given and received with simple dignity.

... Soup was made from the bones of the meat. Scraps of bread were made into plain boiled plum duff. ... Teeth were cleaned with salt and water, and men gave each other a hair cut. ... Men and women had only the clothes they stood up in – all the others had long since gone to the pawn shop or been made over for the children. (Winifred Campbell, 1976: Folklife, No22)

As this Shankill woman recalls, all the men except two in her street were unemployed in the 1920s and were claiming ‘outdoor relief’ or seeking help through the Poor Law Guardians. This was a period, leading up to the on-set of the Second World War, when such diseases as tuberculosis were rife in the Shankill. Diseases such as this are commonly associated with poor living conditions, inadequate health care, insanitation and poverty. And, in Northern Ireland, it is noted that 35% of the deaths of all 25 to 35 year olds were due to tuberculosis throughout this period; a mortality figure which was 20% higher in Northern Ireland than in Great Britain as a whole. In a survey conducted by the Methodist Church Temperance during the mid-1930s, it was found that of 376 households contacted over half were dependent on state benefits and in ‘considerable economic distress’. Given the living conditions of these members it is, perhaps, hardly surprising that adult and infant mortality rates were so high and that average life spans for the working classes were relatively low when compared to national averages. Indeed, in the Shankill there were few families that did not lose at least a few relatives through tuberculosis and, on occasion, members today recollect entire generations of one family being literally ‘wiped out’ through the disease.

... I suppose there was a lot of real extreme poverty about. A lot of hungry kids and all the diseases that would have gone with the hunger like tuberculosis and rickets. There would have been a lot of children who just were not fed properly ... so I mean it was a poor community.

... I can well remember at 11 years of age (early 1950s) when my school teacher actually took me up and showed me her house with all the other children in the class ... Unlike our mothers, when Mrs S. changed her dress she also changed her shoes! It was the first time we ever saw whole outfits that matched up with each other.

... She took us to see, now this was unheard of for children from the Shankill Road going to see *The Merchant of Venice*! I know that other school teachers would have said, 'Why bother. They're only from the Shankill. They're not going anywhere!' (Shankill Resident: Recorded Biography, 1996)

Following hard on the heels of this long period of high unemployment, social and economic deprivation, came the Second World War which saw many eligible Shankill men signing up for the 36th Division of the Ulster Rifles or, on occasion, other British army units stationed in the UK. There has always been a strong tradition of Shankill men joining the British army. There has, also, been a seemingly strong tradition of Shankill men having joined the British army seldom returning; of 700 men from the Shankill who fought at the Somme only some 70 returned alive. Of those who joined the army during the Second World War the mortality figures might not be so grim. However, many did not return to the Shankill for long since there was little in the way of work to return to and prospects, at that time, looked far better on the mainland.

... The very earliest memories were in Shankill Road ... my father had joined the Merchant Navy during the war and he had come home. ... I think my primary School days were sort of way very special to me but they were fraught with men coming home from the war including my father and men who had been prisoners of war for a very long time, like my uncle.

... What I remember most about it (that time) was the absence of men ... a lot of men didn't come home from the war and a lot of them who did come home were sick.

... (You see) I never understood the Civil Rights movement properly because I didn't know why the banner said 'Civil Rights for Catholics, One Man, One Vote'. I thought about my uncles coming home from the war and I thought of those who didn't go to the war who lived in my grandmother's house. And, they didn't have a vote. They didn't have a job. And, they didn't have a house. (Shankill Resident: Recorded Biography, 1996)

Bringing this early, somewhat grim, picture of life in the Shankill up to date it is worthwhile noting that since 1976 both north and west Belfast districts, the Shankill-Falls-Crumlin triangle, have been designated 'Special areas of social need' (HMSO,1976) This entire area is described as suffering from extreme social deprivation and disadvantage and, of interest here, within this larger region it is now appreciated that conditions in certain Protestant wards have in fact considerably worsened. 'A Health Profile of the Greater Shankill Area' published in 1995,

commissioned by North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust and 'Making Belfast Work', cites the following statistics:

On employment:

- 66% of males are economically active (Belfast 72.6%) – 40% of these are unemployed (Belfast 19%)
- 42% of females are economically active (Belfast 53.1%) – 35% of these are unemployed (Belfast 11%)

Financial Situation:

- Average weekly disposable income in the Shankill is less than £100.00 (N.I. average £234.75)
- 78.1% of households are in receipt of Social Security benefits (Belfast 59%)

Health Indicators:

- Over 42% of the total population in the Shankill district reported to be suffering from a health problem
- 19.4% of pre-school children suffering from chest problems
- 18.3% of primary school children suffered from chest problems
- 10% of babies born pre-term, 7.5% below 2,5000 grams at birth
- Only 32.7% of men felt their health was 'good' (Belfast 60%)
- Only 30,8% of women felt their health was 'good' (Belfast 54%)
- One in four women, one in eight men take medication specifically for mental health problems

Lifestyle Indicators:

- 42% of young people (16-21 years) smoking
- 51% of young people (16-21 years) drinking alcohol regularly
- 36% of women (Belfast 31%) and 46.4% of men (Belfast 33%) smoke

As is commented in the 'Discussion and Conclusion' to this report, poor health status is generally associated with relative deprivation and poverty. Many members of the Shankill district, as the report indicates, are currently living on or below the poverty

line and, as such, we might expect them to have a poorer health status than others who are relatively more affluent. Also, as the report suggests, the high incidence of mental health problems – exacerbated, one might conjecture, by both states of poverty and the Troubles – has led to a much higher than average incidence of anxiety, depression, agoraphobia and prescribed drug abuse amongst both men and women residents of this Protestant locality. In a document published by the Shankill Stress Group (1995), it is noted that in the area of North West Belfast having a population, in total, of some 168,000 people, approximately 10% of members ‘require to see a doctor with reference to some type of stress-related illness at least once in their adult lives.’ The reasons given for anxiety, in response to a survey conducted by the Shankill Stress Group, were as follows:

- 20% cited their environment,
- 18% relationships,
- 16% bereavement,
- 14% job loss,
- 19% carers of family members and,
- 13% cited political uncertainty.

It is evident that, in order to alleviate stress many members regularly take medication to manage symptoms of depression and anxiety. However, as well as taking prescribed medication, it is recognised that those most at risk of such mental ill health, as is found in the Shankill, often adopt ‘health damaging’ behaviours as coping strategies. Such factors, in part, are used to explain the much higher than average levels of smoking and alcohol use in the Shankill when compared to national figures, and the high incidence of chest complaints and infections in young children.

As is stated in the Health Profile:

... The findings of this project undoubtedly identify the Shankill area in terms of comparison with Belfast in particular and Northern Ireland generally, as an area of extreme material and social deprivation and resulting poor health status.

... Poverty in a society affects those most vulnerable within it. Agencies such as Save The Children and Child Poverty Action Group have identified children as the most vulnerable group in any community, and the Shankill is no exception. Almost 20% of its babies and pre-school children suffer from a chest problem. ... Only 1% of the Shankill attain a third level qualification. The proportion of the population who have left school

with no qualifications is 83% compared to 66% in Belfast. (And) ... *'Low academic attainment is the portent of long-term social disadvantage and poorer health status'* EHSSB, 1995. (Dunwoody, 1995: 59-60)

A brief review of the literature appertaining to Ulster's Protestant working class:

Much has been written about Northern Ireland in this previous thirty years, by both academics and journalists, which relates directly to the Troubles. There is also a considerable body of academic literature relating to members of the Catholic community within the Province. Proportionately less, however, has been written by academics about Ulster's Protestant population although, clearly, there have been a number of highly informative and sensitive sociological and anthropological studies. Perhaps a useful way of introducing some of the academic literature which is available may be by reference to comments made by Jenkins (1992) on the way in which some ethnographic research has been conducted in this conflict-ridden society.

In a review in *Current Anthropology*, Jenkins takes issue with the way in which the American anthropologist, Allen Feldman (1991), undertook research in Ulster slighting it as:

... parachute anthropology unsupported by the deep context that is one of the strongest cards in the anthropological hand. (Jenkins, 1992: 233)

In Jenkins' view, Feldman's account of violence in Ulster society was lacking in an intimate knowledge of the field as evidenced in, for instance, an apparent lack of familiarity with local language idioms. In particular, Jenkins takes issue over the 'cleaned-up' manner in which many extracts from narrative interviews are presented and suggests that, in the process of writing-up his fieldwork, Feldman is essentially 'doing violence to the subject' by treating the things people say as:

... texts to be interrogated for their meaning ... (such that) ... the interpretation of oral testimony derives manifestly from theoretical preconception rather than from what appears to have been said or from the ethnographic context. Far too often, the testimony of Feldman's informants is not so much interpreted as transformed into a dubious or spurious exemplification of his argument. (Jenkins, 1992: 234)

This criticism of the spurious use of ethnographic data to 'fit' an argument is an issue requiring serious consideration in any research study. However, suffice it to say at this point that, irrespective of how familiar one is with an ethnographic context, there are always bound to be problems in making sense of - interpreting and presenting - what often takes the form of members' often idiosyncratic and highly subjective narrativisations of lived experience.

The task facing any ethnographer, not only those researching in conflict-ridden societies, is that of acquiring authentic data and in using this data appropriately. This, in Jenkins' view, is not characteristic of Feldman's work since the way in which members' statements have been presented suggests that they have been selectively used and 'cleaned up' in order to illustrate a pre-conceived, if interesting, model of reality. Perhaps, as Jenkins' suggests, asking informants whether or not they recognise themselves in what it is that academics are saying about them would be as useful a way as any of evaluating studies, such as that by Feldman, for their validity and authenticity. As Jenkins continues, unless members may recognise themselves in the context of such explications of social experience, then academics need to ask whether indeed this procedure has merely been successful in what is little more than the 'objectification of peoples lives and deaths'. An objectification which is evident in the portrayal, for example, of members' violent death and their dead as '... the stiff is a value form that is subjected to clandestine exchanges and the production of stiffs can be looked upon as a simulation of political codes'. As Jenkins notes:

... Tell that to the mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, and daughters and sons of "stiffs" - because, after all, what Feldman is here talking about is not *just* bodies. Bodies are also (and primarily) people. He is talking about dead people and about killing, frequently brutal killing. The objectification of people's lives and deaths in this manner is neither necessary nor forgivable. Objectivity is one thing, objectification another. If we can do research only by dehumanising our research subjects, we ought to pack up and go home. (Jenkins, 1992: 235)

In a consideration of the academic literature relating to any ethnographic context, therefore, it is wise to be aware of what can be the dehumanising aspects of social

research. There is a great need, as Jenkins has indicated, to be aware of a tendency to objectify peoples' lives within the context of research and respond to them as objects rather than conscious and experiencing subjects of study.

Bearing these comments in mind; a brief survey of literature relating specifically to Ulster's Protestant community is most appropriately introduced by reference to the landmark work of Rosemary Harris (1972) whose fieldwork in the 1960s pre-dated the onset of the most recent Troubles. Harris, in looking to aspects of prejudice and tolerance in Ulster society, considers in some detail the influence of denominationalism within the Protestant community and the role of the Orange Order which, in her view, functions as an organisation linking Protestants across denominational boundaries. Ulster Protestants, according to Harris, are not only divided religiously but, also, appear more deeply divided socially than the Catholic community. In fact what she felt characterised the Protestant community most clearly was, indeed, the various cleavages, suspicions and differences within the community let alone any supposed or real differences with their neighbours:

... The consequences of the existence of these anxieties (about neighbouring Catholics, Roman Catholic Church, the consequences of a united Ireland) were made more complex by the fact that the Protestants as a group were split by various cleavages, both denominationally and, almost more important, in terms of social status. There was considerable distrust felt by those Protestants who were less prosperous and influential for those at the top, and this attitude was reinforced by particularly marked misunderstandings of the workings of the outside, bureaucratic world. The distrust felt for the political leaders and the local establishment meant that they were those from whom the ordinary Protestants could least accept demands for religious toleration. (Harris, 1972: 197)

Significantly, the denominational, social and economic cleavages described by Harris as characteristic of the rural Protestant community of Ballybeg during the 1960s are still evident in contemporary working class Protestant communities. With respect to denominationalism, for instance, the Shankill Road community is peppered with chapels and churches representing over twenty religious denominations including the John Knox Memorial, the Shankill Baptist Tabernacle, the Shankill Road Mission, the Shankill Methodist Church, the Church of Ireland and the Presbyterian Church among

many others. So, at least on the surface, contemporary working class communities such as the Shankill - much like rural Ballybeg in the 1960s - appear characterised by a strong sense of individualism and *difference* in worship if not, maybe, in all other areas of social and economic life.

... The Protestant emphasis on individual choice has simply manifested itself in Northern Ireland with a plethora of competing 'sects' and churches. Even in the Greater Shankill area there are twenty-three different denominations.

Is it any wonder that Prods cannot speak with one voice? I tried to get the churches on the Shankill to co-operate on a community festival and gave up in frustration. There were too many personalities, too many competing interests, and I was left feeling they really had no heart in working together. (Island Pamphlets 9, 1994: 19)

In further reference to Harris' classic study; having talked at length about cleavages and differences in members' religious affiliations she reflects upon the deep suspicion of rural Protestants to the *outside* and to bureaucracy. Members of the Ballybeg community were found to be deeply suspicious of most, if not everything, beyond their immediate and familiar experience or locale. And, this is a sentiment which is somewhat characteristic of contemporary working class Protestants of the Shankill who, as often said, are cautious in their dealings with local government officials, social security representatives, the police and currently most of those they would describe as *outsiders* to their community. Members' wariness of outsiders and officialdom has, as Hewitt (1987) suggests, been largely shaped by decades of relatively high unemployment amongst the urban working classes. Declining industries and lack of economic alternatives has, quite simply, exacerbated feelings of social and financial insecurity and led, often, to genuine hardship.

As Hewitt (1987) notes, poverty and poor housing along with other forms of social deprivation associated with unfavourable economic conditions have not been solely the prerogative of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. Whole sections of the Protestant community have lived in real poverty, tolerated squalid housing conditions and suffered exceptionally high rates of unemployment. In the words of one prominent member of the Shankill community:

... Personally I was born in grinding poverty in the back streets of the Shankill Road (the heart of the Empire as we misguided wretches used to call it).

One would not have dared call the housing 'slums', just as the starvation diet, the unhygienic conditions, the avoidable illness and the vermin were never publicly admitted. Unemployment was rife in the Shankill just as in the Catholic districts, but we said nothing and suffered on because we were told by our political masters discrimination did not exist and that 'We were the people!'

Nothing gets up working-class Protestant's noses more than Catholics of whatever class proclaiming that all Protestants were of the ascendancy. ... The have-not Protestants suffered every bit from the Master's discrimination as did their Catholic neighbours on the Falls Road. (Spence, 1992: 69)

It is of interest that urban working class communities such as the Shankill which, for reasons to be explored, quietly tolerated highly unfavourable economic and social conditions have been those closely associated with Loyalist paramilitary organisations; that is with a relatively large and influential paramilitary presence. High unemployment, economic hardship, social and denominational splits and cleavages, a deep suspicion of outsiders are, indeed, factors which have been a constant in the lives of most Shankill members since well before Harris' study of rural Ballybeg some three decades ago. In acknowledging the existence of such relatively deprived social and economic circumstances describing members' lifestyle for most of this century it would, as such, be a gross over-simplification to suggest that paramilitary organisations simply evolved and flourished in order to protect a qualitatively better lifestyle. For, by and large, working class Protestants of the Shankill did not enjoy the privileges associated with, and presumed descriptive of, those who by religious heritage are identified as members of the Protestant Ascendancy. Indeed, at the outset of the most recent Troubles many reports attest to both Protestant and Catholic members of urban working class communities, when uprooted and moved to more segregated areas, being surprised and shocked that they lived in much the same poor, if not squalid, conditions.

Grievances existing between Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland, as Hewitt (1987) says, which lay stress upon discrepancies in socio-economic, living, housing, working conditions or related political issues such as gerrymandering, do not begin to explain why such a level of antagonism, in fact,

developed between working class members of Protestant and Catholic persuasion and certainly do not account for the violence. There are, as he illustrates, much greater social, economic and political disparities existing between ethnic groups in other societies and, although there may be some antagonism, violence has never erupted. So, in his view, regardless of the level of sophistication of, for example, Marxist analyses of the conflict in Ulster such explanations still leave many questions unanswered.

Given the reality of everyday life in urban working class Protestant communities such as the Shankill as, for the most part, that of poor living conditions and financial hardship it is apposite to ask why such social and economic deprivation has largely failed to attract the same degree of attention - from academics or the media - paid throughout the years of the Troubles to similar social and economic deprivation in Catholic areas. As suggested in a recent publication, A Health Profile of the Greater Shankill Area, (Dunwoody, 1995), cited previously, this discrepancy in attention perhaps resulted because of a distorted image fostered by the media of the reality of life in such Protestant localities as the Shankill:

... The media image of the Shankill is that of the seat of traditional working class Protestantism. ... As the seat of Protestantism it was also assumed by many outsiders to be in receipt of the material advantage of the 'Protestant Ascendancy'.

Over the years there has been considerable debate as to why Protestant areas of need did not attract the same levels of academic and media attention as the Catholic areas of need. It has been suggested that one explanation may be that a strong sense of individualism and pride inhibits Protestant groups from approaching charities, declaring their need, asking for and receiving help. (Dunwoody, 1995: 1)

Indeed, a frequent complaint voiced by working class Protestant community workers is that both the media and the government have continually over-simplified and misrepresented their plight and responded to situations and events in what is considered to be a stereotypical manner. Old ideas, old images of the Protestant working class as being advantaged in terms of jobs and living conditions over their Catholic neighbours have, it is currently argued, often been gross distortions. And, much because of a strong sense of individualism and pride, as noted by Harris,

members of working class Protestant communities have indirectly allowed this image of a relatively affluent and prosperous life style to perpetuate.

Hence, although there has been much popular blame attributed to the media in particular for what is considered to be a negative image attaching to the working class Protestant community and to its' being deliberately misrepresented, there has been - as talked of in the document, Beyond the Fife and Drum, (Island Pamphlets 11, 1995) - a strong resistance on the part of members to either declare themselves in need or ask for, or accept, help. As a result there have been:

... Until Geoffrey Beattie's illuminating We Are the People ... few voices to speak up for the Protestant working class ... (He) has provided an insight into the Protestant mind that is all to rare. (The Belfast Telegraph, 1992)

So, prior to the 1990s there was a notably small, yet informative, collection of studies relating to working class Protestant communities which described a way of life quite similar in terms of activities, traditions, local organisations, to that portrayed in Harris earlier work. During the 1990s, however, there has been a flurry of mainly, locally initiated studies of the Protestant working class which, in the main, have been undertaken with a determined view to correct what is now perceived as a somewhat distorted popular image describing this community. Beattie, an academic by profession and Shankill man by birth whose text, We are the People (1992), is referred to above, is one such writer within this genre; a genre which, as the quote suggests, provides an interesting and somewhat different insight into the working class Protestant mentality.

Beattie's narrative begins with a description of his childhood in the Shankill and with a recollection of the somewhat dubious privileges attached to working class membership of the Protestant Ascendancy:

... Did I remember the old house? That house was imprinted on my brain. The root of every insecurity and anxiety ... I had grown up in that little mill house with the outside toilet, full of slugs, learning over the years to go to the toilet quickly before one

of them got the opportunity to slide over my backside. The wallpaper on the kitchen walls would never stay on, because the walls were so damp.

I hated that house, but I never dared criticise it - lest it set off another argument. 'You're a wee snob, that's your problem. Only snobs are ashamed of where they grew up.' But I wasn't ashamed of where I grew up - I just hated that squalor of the place, and got angry that others saw nothing wrong with it. (Beattie, 1992: 9-10)

Such an account of housing conditions, backyard toilets, damp and squalor, of being called a 'wee snob' if one complained, would be familiar to all members of the Shankill Road community from the days before the current Troubles began and re-development was in the air. For, although certain sections of the working class Protestant community clearly did enjoy certain employment advantages during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, since before the war and with the rapid decline of traditional industries unemployment - with all its attendant deprivations - has been rife throughout Northern Ireland. As reported in the Shankill Think Tank's publication, A New Beginning, (Island Pamphlets 13, 1995):

... Despite claims at the beginning of the present Troubles that the Protestant working class was 'better off' than the Catholic working class, much of this 'betterment' was marginal, and in those sectors where Protestants *did* possess a substantial employment advantage, the collapse during the 60s and 70s of much of their traditional industrial base soon enforced its own brand of 'equality'. Most people along the Falls Road would now acknowledge the similar situation which pertains across the 'peaceline' on the Shankill Road.

Where differences do exist they are often 'balanced out': one might suffer more deprivation the other more disadvantage. (Island Pamphlets 13, 1995: 20)

For all its non-academic form and pretensions, Beattie's account does much to redress the stereotypical image of a blanketly privileged Protestant community in Northern Ireland. He offers, instead, a view of a community that has not, as so popularly portrayed in the media, appeared to prosper at the expense of its Catholic neighbours. Indeed, from as far back as Beattie remembers from personal experience and, also, from what his parents' generation recalled of times preceding his birth, life in the Shankill was never considered either easy or advantaged. Yet, in knowing how appalling conditions might be there had always been, as he reiterates, a prevailing members' ethos which, in practice, meant that it was far worse to seek help than suffer in silence.

What is clearly evident in Beattie's narrative is the general importance which working class members, whether poverty ridden, living in squalor, financially crippled, are seen to attach to what is often described in the literature as an almost over-bearing sense of pride. Indeed, it has been simplistically argued that it is misplaced pride on the part of the Protestant population which has, for a considerable time, inhibited members of increasingly deprived communities from seeking help. Yet, as archaic as such notions as pride and shame may seem in the modern world, there is much mileage to be gained from a serious consideration of working class members so-called inflated and misplaced sense of pride. It is a sense which, on the one hand within a popular idiom, is seen in their dogged retention of traditional activities, organisations, rites and ceremonies. Yet, on the other hand as seen by them selves, relates to a genuine feeling of self-worth that they clearly derive from belonging to specific communities such as the Shankill. For, as members of the Shankill would recognise, the feeling of self-worth that they personally derive from identifying themselves as 'Shankill born and bred' has, perhaps, been all they have felt able to hold on to. As the opening quotation so aptly notes:

... If you are poor, unemployed, and live in a country rotted with violence and universally pitied, allegiance to some historical cause can be all you feel you have.
(Aitkenhead, *The Guardian*: 2.5.1997)

Coming to an understanding of members' deep sense of pride, the feeling of self-worth gained through belonging to a community is, perhaps, as good a starting point as any in attempting to gain an insight into the 'Protestant mind' which Beattie, as referred to above, is considered to facilitate. For, as misguided and misplaced as outsiders may consider, it is nevertheless the case that the value members attach to 'who' they are and where they belong is something which, for the most part, simply goes without saying and upon which much else appears to be founded. As Beattie says of his father, for instance:

... My father was from the Shankill, and my mother never let us forget it. He wasn't an Orangeman, and he wasn't a bigot, and he didn't hate Catholics. But she was proud of his Shankill roots, even if she did only mention them by way of a joke.

He need not have been a Shankill Road man, he grew up on Upper Charleville Street just off Snugville Street, which ran from the Shankill to the Crumlin. He could have been a Crumlin Road man, if such a thing existed. But it didn't and he wasn't. 'He was secretly very proud of his background,' she says. 'He didn't boast about it, but then again he didn't have to.' (Beattie, 1992: 157-8)

And, in the words of a Shankill Road woman 'born and bred':

... Oh, I will always be a Shankill Road woman. Those who came from the Shankill would say, 'I'm Shankill born and bred.' Like those from the Newtownards Road would say, 'I'm Newtownards Road born and bred.' Everybody says it, you know! It's only the ones that's born in Rathcoole would say they come from Rathcoole.

Yes, being a Shankill Road woman is very important to me because it gives you that wee bit, that sense of identity that you like to have. Well, you knew your people's people came from there and everything about them. And, everybody knew your business; who your mother married and the like.

Like, it's not important to the young ones in Rathcoole but it's still important to the people that live in the Shankill. Very important to them. (Shankill Road Resident: Recorded Interview 1998)

Clearly, when talking about working class members' sense of pride this has little, if anything to do with material wellbeing or the general state of living conditions within communities like the Shankill. Indeed, there was only ever very limited mileage to be gained, as described by Molly (Recorded Conversations, 1996/97), from having a doorstep 'all shined up to the knocker' or in being the first on the street with a piano. Rather, members' sense of pride was, and still is, very much wrapped up in a sense of 'who' they are within a somewhat broader social and historical context. Hence, material hardship, poverty, squalor - in and of it self - were not seen as material states of living about which one should inherently be ashamed. Rather, shame was, and largely still is, experienced when one forgets 'who' one is and to whom one belongs; when, for instance one is seen to be either unable to cope and seeking help elsewhere or, perhaps, expressing pretensions of a 'wee snob'. As David Krause (1976) says of the young Sean O'Casey:

... Proud, Protestant and poor ... The young Sean O'Casey was a founder-member of the St Laurence O'Toole Piper's Band, and on one occasion the band had arranged to play at a special function outside Dublin. Since the members were expected to pay their own train fare, this meant that the unemployed and penniless Sean could not make the journey. When several of his friends volunteered to buy the ticket for him, 'Sean the Proud', as he was known ... replied in a phrase that might have characterised his whole life: 'I wouldn't go to heaven on a free ticket.' (Krause, 1976: 5)

Much of the literature relating to the working class Ulster Protestant community refers frequently and consistently to what is described as members'

abiding sense of pride in 'who' they are and to 'whom' and 'where' they belong and to that often heard, everyday, golden rule of 'never asking nobody for nothing'. If asked, as such, to describe in a nutshell salient characteristics of a working class Protestant 'mind set' it would, almost by definition, have to include reference to the very real and significant distinction members make between pride and shame in the context of their experience. Of course, the somewhat stereotypical attitude to life which such an image of a stalwart, dour, individualistic and tradition-oriented people suggests was, in practice, bound to be greatly compromised by prevailing circumstances of unacceptably high rates of unemployment and the Troubles. Indeed, for the most part, such conditions have meant that members could not realistically retain what might be considered traditional ways of 'coping', of 'making do' of 'not asking nobody for nothing'. And, most notably during this current decade of the 1990s, local activists - community workers, politicians, paramilitary representatives - have begun to address the effect on both members' livelihoods and the impression given to outsiders that prevailing attitudes to pride and shame, to tradition, to individualism, have had over the years. Indeed, during the previous five years there has been a positive commitment on the part of Shankill community representatives to seek assistance for redevelopment and regeneration of the district from outside the community. As Andrew Marr of the Independent comments with respect to the Protestant community in general:

... Unionists have learned to play the underdog and to use the language that is listened to by liberal opinion-formers, to speak of violations of their civil rights and of the threat to their identity.

... Their claim to be an endangered and minority species is only partly PR; it is also deeply felt. (Marr, The Independent: 10.7.1996)

Working class Protestants, it might be suggested, have begun to form their own conclusions as to why there has been an apparently unsympathetic response to poverty and deprivation in their communities when, as is well documented, there has been considerable emphasis focused on similar problems in neighbouring Catholic areas. This is not to suggest that predominantly Catholic areas were not greatly

deprived and disadvantaged for, quite evidently, they were but, simply, to point out that many Protestant working class communities faced very similar problems. While not ignoring working class members, if - as suggested – perhaps unwise and mistaken collusion in the Protestant Ascendancy, Jackie Redpath (1992) - Shankill Community Worker - comments on the syndrome of ‘pride and shame’ which has effectively concealed their problems:

... it is essential to go back to before things are at the moment. The reality is the Protestant community held power for fifty years ... given the social conditions in the streets of the Shankill Road, Silverstream, or wherever - some ‘ascendancy’ many will say. But the reality is that the Protestant working class were part of that power structure and assented to it to some degree and to some level in their own interest.
... Another feature of the Protestant community is that it is individualistic. ... The consequence of individualistic thinking is to look after yourself and those that are closest to you. Therefore when you cannot look after yourself there is a degree of shame in it ... it is all tied up with pride and shame. (Redpath, 1992: 27)

Characteristics described, above, as typical of a working class Protestant mentality are clearly not in themselves inherently negative nor, indeed, sufficient to explain the often unsympathetic response which this community has engendered over the years. All that might be suggested, at this stage, is that when put into practice in the context of members’ everyday lives, such a worldview or mentality has not always appeared to work to the advantage of these members. Indeed, talking metaphorically, it might be considered that such a worldview or mentality, of itself, may have become the weapon whereby working class members have, in effect, shot themselves in the foot. Such a view, now well appreciated by Shankill community workers and local politicians, is currently being addressed in an attempt to correct the often distorted impression outsiders have fostered of a working class Ulster Protestant way of life.

All the features so far described as contributing to a distinctly working class Protestant way of life; denominationalism, individualism, a deep sense of pride and shame, suspicion of outsiders, an emphasis on tradition, and so forth, have inevitably resulted in, as Harris describes, a high degree of fragmentation, of splits and cleavages within the Protestant community as a whole. Indeed, splits, cleavages, fragmentation might be described as defining ‘order’ within this community. And, in recognising

this prevailing state of affairs predicated upon much in the way of 'individualism' and 'difference', it has been the view of various commentators; Harris (1972, 89), Bruce (1985, 86, 94), Buckley (1984, 89), Edwards (1999) et al, that it has been the traditional role of the Orange Order to link Protestants across these potentially disparate and conflicting denominational, socio-economic and territorial boundaries. Much has been written and suggested about the traditional place of the Orange Order in Protestant members' lives. Suffice it to say at this juncture that there is much local difference of opinion as to the role, the integrity and current viability of this institution among working class Protestants. It is suggested that amongst members of the Shankill Road community, for instance, the Orange Order plays a significant social role - as a meeting-point and social gathering - but it does not appear to be the influential or dynamic religio-political force within the context of members' everyday life which, perhaps, is the impression outsiders have gained through media portrayals of the marching season. A more realistic portrayal might be similar to Edwards' observation:

... By mid-afternoon, I realised that the secret weapon of Ulster Protestants was an immense capacity for enduring boredom. Orangemen sat in the middle of nowhere, equably contemplating days of hanging about waiting. I acquainted Graham (local historian, teacher, Orangeman) with this great truth. 'But what else are monthly lodge meetings for, but to equip Orangemen to be bored?' he asked. 'And what is the Twelfth of July, but being bored in a field?' (Edwards, The Independent: 12.7.1996)

Difference, more than any other organising characteristic, is what appears to best describe this community of Ulster Protestants; it is difference, as perceived in members' individual expressions of a way of life, which exists at almost every level of social organisation and within every walk of life. And, one might speculate, that if there was no apparent 'difference' perceived between 'what' or 'who' or 'why' or 'where' then members would, almost deliberately, manufacture it for - as paradoxical as it seems to outsiders - it is the quality of 'difference' which is familiar cultural territory for Ulster Protestants. Harris, back in the 1960s, was herself acutely aware of this element of difference in members' lives although she did not conjecture, as here, that possibly this quality is something of an organising principle in itself. She did,

however, make the important and highly significant point that there were, even prior to the Troubles, more differences evident within the Protestant community than presented themselves as significant between the Protestant and Catholic working class communities.

This element of 'difference' which is largely summed up in quasi-explanations relating to the quality of individualism in Protestant - as distinct to any other form of Christian - religious thought, has had some very obvious and practical consequences in terms of community life. Various local publications attest to the difficulty which community workers and local politicians have found in simply getting projects off the ground in working class Protestant areas. There is difficulty, it is stressed, in focusing members' attention and efforts on programmes of development which foster co-operation within local communities because of the many splits and cleavages. Adding to this members' traditional attitudes to pride and shame - of 'not asking nobody for nothing' - and all the ingredients for potential misunderstanding and controversy, let alone stagnation, are to hand.

So, up to this point, the only factor cited in the literature that is considered, to some degree at least, to draw the different factions of the Protestant community together - to afford an impression or appearance of unity in the face of much obvious 'difference' - is the institution of the Orange Order of which Fintan O'Toole (1996) comments:

... The other great strength of Orangeism is its ability to present an appearance of unity at times of division with both Ulster Protestantism and Ulster Unionism. It is easily forgotten that Protestantism in Ireland incorporates dozens of competing churches, and that it has often been riven with bitter division between Presbyterians and Episcopalians.

The Order really is experienced by many Protestants as a social space in which religious and class differences can be set aside. Behind the dogged insistence on preserving what are believed to be traditional Orange practices is the fear that, without the Order, Protestantism itself could collapse into a multitude of sects and factions.

The appeal of the Orange Order as a symbol of Protestant and Unionist unity is, in this context, obvious. The rallying call from Portadown may be based on a spurious notion ... but it revivifies the simplifying myth of a steadfast people defending its ancient rights. (O'Toole, The Guardian: 10.7.1996)

Clearly, the Orange Order has been somewhat successful in at least affording an appearance of unity in a social and cultural arena predicated, in the main, upon much obvious and real difference. The Order, as Buckley (1989) notes, has achieved this primarily through focusing on a version of history centred on the events of the seventeenth century which, in turn, are used to justify and reconfirm the power, prestige and status of the present-day Protestant community. In other words, what they offer is a version of history which props-up the notion of the Protestant Ascendancy and all its attendant privileges. In this view, therefore, what may be described as a sense of unity is culturally manufactured through the medium of history and tradition; that is through ceremonies, re-enactments of historical battles, rituals, parades and political arenas in which the Orange Order consistently focuses attention on a common heritage and a common sense of history that, quite effectively and in ways other political, religious and social institutions fail to do, draws together the different factions of the Protestant community.

The sense of history and tradition upon which the Orange Order is founded is, in practice, used as a political rhetoric which, as Buckley says, either justifies or condemns. This is not, however, the only version of history which has a certain currency amongst the Protestant population for there is also a Protestant 'Biblical' version and, more recently, the revival of an ancient Pictish Cruthin version in which members' history is traced back to prehistoric Ireland. The Biblical version of history which has considerable influence amongst a large section of Northern Irish Protestants is used, in Buckley's terms, as a moral charter providing rules and guidelines dating back to the days of the Bible on how to live one's life today. In practice, this is the version claimed by religious fundamentalists of whom the Reverend Ian Paisley is perhaps best known. Paisley propagates a view of history that, in brief, encompasses the prophetic tradition dating back to the days of the Biblical prophets. As such, answers to all life's problems may be sought in the written words of the

Bible which, as a text, is seen to encapsulate the realm of the sacred in contrast to the 'profanities of worldly existence':

... Notice I say the sin of the world not the sins of the world, the problem is *sin*, sin lies at the heart of every problem of the world. ... sin is at the heart of your problem. ...the Troubles in Belfast are not political or economic, the trouble is *sin* And the only answer is the Lamb of God, the Uncongealed Blood of the Lamb of God.

There are many religions in the world to deal with sin, But God's answer to sin - that ugly disease that corrupts and destroys the soul of man, God's answer to that sin is the Lamb of God and that is the only answer. (Paisley, I.: In Fairweather, 1986: 273)

In contrast to widely acknowledged versions of history which focus on either political events of the seventeenth century or religious fundamentalism of Biblical origins, Buckley (1989) also draws attention to an alternative version of history which has gained some support amongst mainly working class Protestants who are neither religious fundamentalists nor supporters of the traditional Orange Order. This version involves a claim to historical descent from the Pictish Cruthin, the earliest known inhabitants of prehistoric Ireland. Adamson (1974, 1982), best known for his research into the relationship of the Cruthin to the Scottish Picts, has been influential in propagating this version of history particularly amongst members of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA); a leading paramilitary group which has endorsed and adopted his views on the Cruthinic rather than Gaelic origins of Irish history. As Buckley, describes;

... the Cruthin argument addresses directly the rhetorical challenge of Irish Nationalist history. It makes the claim that Ulster Protestants, and particularly those who emigrated from Scotland, have at least as much right to live in Ireland as do Irish Catholics. Second, it takes from the nationalist heritage many of its most treasured traits by arguing their Cruthinic rather than Gaelic origins. And, finally, the historical lynch pin of Irish nationalism, the Plantation of Ireland, is transformed from a conquest by an oppressive people into a *reconquest* by a people who had formerly been forcefully expelled.' (Buckley, 1989: 194)

Interest, here, is not with the 'rightness' or 'authenticity' or 'relative merits' of these various Protestant versions of history nor the use - often for political ends - to which they have been put in contemporary Ulster by various religious, paramilitary and political groupings. Rather they are outlined, here, as further illustration of the potential differences, splits and cleavages which permeate the Protestant community

and constitute, so it may be argued, the one common feature of the Northern Irish, working class Protestant community. For, as Buckley says, 'the different forms of history found here appeal to different groups of people in different ways' and they are, in turn, used by members to focus allegiances, to generate stratagems for action, to justify different political positions and their means of achieving them.

The more one explores the 'differences'; in denominationalism, in socio-economic status, in political allegiances, in versions of history, in attitudes toward institutions like the Orange Order, the Masons and so forth, permeating throughout the working class Protestant community so it becomes increasingly evident that it is difficult, if not impossible, to talk meaningfully about these people in terms of any one dimension of their lives be this their religiosity, their political affiliations, their sense of history, their socio-economic circumstance, for issues appear to cross-cut and contradict one other at every juncture. To gain an insight into the Protestant mind, therefore, which The Belfast Telegraph congratulated Beattie (1993) on having achieved, there is a need perhaps to address what presents itself as the paradoxical and, often, overtly self-contradictory nature of much which is the working class Protestant experience; an experience which Beattie so entertainingly explores through his own family's experience as members of the Shankill Road community.

Such personal portraits of a way of life, as provided by Beattie, may not be objective and analytic in ways traditionally preferred by social scientists in their quest to provide models or frameworks within which obvious and disparate versions of experience, of history, and so forth might be, at least, talked about in a seemingly objectively fashion. But, even so, such portraits provide an insight into what it is to live the life which, for instance, Buckley (1989 et al), Bruce (1992, 1994), Hewitt (1987), Jenkins (1882, 1983, 94), Bell (1987) and many notable others have had considerable success in describing and explaining from their academic position. In other words, writers such as Beattie provide an 'insiders' view on what it is to live the

sort of life outlined briefly above which - much because life itself seems predicated on *difference* - members shimmy between various and often contradictory versions of a way of life almost, it seems, within the same cultural breath and rarely, so it appears, find this problematic. Because of this seeming cultural ability to, in effect, absorb and live with difference - an ability indicated by Beattie - so we find members' versions of their Ulster Protestant reality to be, in practice, as disparate as, for example, the following extracts illustrate:

... I don't believe I could have coped with my life without God, without Christ and the Bible. If you are saved you can commit yourself to the Lord and just leave it. (Of women's groups) they say they want to be equal to men, but a woman must be on a pedestal to a man so men can look up to her and give her respect. ... But younger women they want to do things that have always been the man's privilege.

(Of the Troubles) But there isn't really a political solution, because it's a religious battle against the rising of the anti-Christ and those who are born again, whether they be black, white, Protestant or Catholic, he's coming for those. But most people are in utter darkness. (Paisley, E. In Fairweather et al, 1986: 278)

and,

It's different for Protestant women, we're not so hooked on the church, except for those born-again Christians. I can't think of any way of putting it that doesn't sound awful funny - you know the way they talk, 'seen the light', 'giving themselves to God', people like that go to church. Normal ordinary people don't go to church.

Sure, there's Loyalists go to Paisley's church, but that's not just religion, that's Paisley - he preaches Loyalism from the pulpit, and I'm not really a Loyalist. Most women are concerned about their families, it's hard enough to cope without worrying about the church. ('Margaret' In Fairweather et al, 1986: 319)

The Dimension of Violence in Members' Lives

Alongside the many dimensions of potential social and cultural 'difference' - call this fragmentation, cleavages, splits - there is also the additional complicating factor exacerbated by the on-going conflict - the Troubles - of a high level of violence, of one sort or another, which is an indisputable reality in the context of members' everyday lives. Any ethnographic study of Northern Ireland must, at some stage, acknowledge and address the prevalence of violence, both within communities and across the sectarian divide, for it would be true to say that much which goes on, especially within communities like the Shankill, does so against this backdrop. Indeed, violence or the threat of violence of one sort or another might be described as at the forefront of members' lived experience and much is clearly done, thought and felt because of its' very prevalence. As Brewer (1991) so aptly illustrates when, at the

funeral of a UVF member during a confrontation between Protestant women and the security forces, an RUC Officer has had enough of listening:

... I remember we were at this UVF funeral and they (the authorities) really held back. There were people mouthing us and throwing everything at us. There was this woman too, and she was up at the front and she was spitting and punching policemen. All I remember is when they give the order that we were to use force, yer woman was standing right in front of me. It was like a vision, and she was still mouthing away. It was great. I got great pleasure from that. (Brewer, 1991b: 275)

With reference to a few notable studies of violence in this ethnographic context attention is directed, in particular, to Edgerton's (1986) suggestion that violence or aggression, in its various guises, is *not* considered to be an uncommon or abnormal response to disagreements of one form or another either within families, Protestant or other, or within broader community structures.

Many writers, when discussing violence in Northern Ireland tend to begin their analyses from the premise that the phenomenon of violence in the course of everyday situations is not the norm; that violence is an aberrant form of behaviour which, as if by definition, indicates a level of deviance or malfunctioning within a family, a community, a society. If starting from such a premise then, clearly, the expectation is that so-called civilised people, whether within the context of their personal or communal lives, will seek to resolve differences of opinion and routine difficulties by, for instance, 'talking it through'. Certainly, there is a high occidental expectation that women, at least, will seek to resolve their differences peacefully if not simply by turning the other cheek. So, when faced with the reality of members' experience in which there is, often, much evidence of potential if not real violence there has been, as Jackson and Rushton (1982) found, a vast disjuncture between the implicit premises upon which an observer bases their expectations of how a life *should* be lived and what they actually observe as members' social reality. Making sense of this disjuncture and finding an explanation which makes sense in terms of such broad premises outlined above has, then, been much a question of which style of structural analysis - from traditional functionalist to neo-Marxist - one favours.

In the context of Northern Ireland, it is evident from available literature - social and political science - that much academic concern with the phenomenon of violence has, as McFarlane (1986) notes, been with high profile expressions of extreme forms committed or instigated by paramilitaries from across the sectarian divide. Given the longevity of the conflict, spanning some three decades, such an emphasis is to be expected since priority has been given to trying to resolve members' differences at this level. So, if looking to the literature there is a substantial body of information that relates, for instance, to the activities and motivations of political activists; call these paramilitaries or terrorists. In particular, given the emphasis here on the working class Protestant community, there has been a comprehensive study, The Red Hand, by Steve Bruce (1992) which bears testament to the development, organisation and activities of such paramilitary groupings within, communities like the Shankill.

Notably, there is a relatively recent study by Sluka (1989, 1990) which addresses violence at this high-profile level but does so through focusing on members' responses to the paramilitary presence within their community. Sluka's ethnography of the Catholic community of the Divis Flats, bordering the Shankill Road, is the only study to date which considers in some detail the effect on members' everyday life of living alongside known Republican paramilitaries; that is living within a community in which it is known that family members and neighbours are, potentially, active paramilitaries. The Divis Flats is a small, tight-knit community in which there has been a high paramilitary presence for a considerable time and, clearly, much of what goes on and by whom is common knowledge. What emerged from Sluka's study was a strong indication that, in the reality of members' lives, a heavy burden of liability is borne by all members of the confessional community for the activities of local paramilitaries. So, even though members may not be directly involved in acts of violence, by virtue of their community membership they bear a considerable burden of liability - a sense of responsibility - for such activities. In

other words, the activities of the few can not, in practice, be isolated from the context within which they are generated or enacted.

Extreme forms of violence which McFarlane and Sluka are referring to have, over the years, become an integral aspect of everyday life within certain Protestant and Catholic working class communities. As such, it would not be too radical to suggest that, over the years of the Troubles, such forms of violence have begun to shape much of what goes on and how it goes on within these communities. In attempting to gain a meaningful understanding of life within such a district as the Shankill Road, therefore, some account must be taken of this volatile and very real dimension of members' lives. This, however, is only one dimension or form of violence - be it extreme - which is evident in the context of members' experience. For, as McFarlane discovered from his own research in rural Ulster:

... The reality of rural Northern Ireland is that there has been a considerable amount of violence - violence not emphasised by the anthropologists. (McFarlane, 1986: 195)

In focusing attention on extreme forms of violence in Ulster, as McFarlane says, until very recently much other everyday violence was under-reported or ignored by social scientists working in this field. Looking further afield, a number of anthropologists; Fox (1977, 1982), Chagnon (1988, 1992), Heald (1989) et al, have considered that there has been an overall failure on the part of social scientists to fully appreciate the extent of all forms of aggression, fighting and violence which routinely goes on in most societies and which is, in itself, a major dynamic shaping a culture. In Chagnon's view, for instance, we should begin our investigations from the perspective that:

... violence is a potent force in human society and may be the principal driving force behind the evolution of a culture. (Chagnon, 1988: 985)

In broadening the perspective and in an attempt to delineate the social context of violence in members' everyday lives - looking to mundane expressions and not simply concentrating on forms of extreme or high-profile violence associated with the paramilitaries - an interesting area of study is opened up which is explored by both McFarlane in his description of 'folk interpretations' of violence and by a number of Feminist writers (Edgerton, 1986, McLaughlin, 1993, et al) in studies of domestic violence in Ulster. McFarlane, in fieldwork conducted during the latter part of the previous decade, discovered some interesting variations on what are largely stereotypical attitudes and responses often reported to acts of violence. He found, for instance, that there is a consistent failure on the part of members of a community to believe that so-called neighbours - members of the same community from whichever section of the sectarian divide they might come - would perpetrate extreme forms of violence, whether terrorist shootings or bombings, within their own locale. In other words, in terms of 'folk interpretations', members consistently placed the blame for such extreme forms of violence on outsiders; 'the world out there' using Fox's terminology. What McFarlane identified as the failure of members in general to believe or, indeed, want to come to terms with, for instance, acts of terrorism as perpetrated by members of their own communities; their neighbours or kin, has been commented upon in a recent local publication:

... So horrendous have been some of the killings that commentators often portray the perpetrators as psychopaths, warped individuals unrepresentative of anyone but themselves. However, even those in the Protestant working class who abhor the killings acknowledge that such an interpretation would be grossly misleading.

We mustn't try to pretend that Loyalist paramilitaries are people who just dropped from the sky ... somehow quite different from the rest of us. They are part and parcel of our community ... Many are ordinary young men who feel they have no choice but to fight back. The same young men who generations ago would have gone to their deaths in the trenches and been hailed as heroes. It's no use demonising them - we need to understand the circumstances which created them. (Island Pamphlets 9, 1994: 20)

When violence does take a high profile form within local communities there is a seeming reluctance on the part of members to accept that one of 'us' was responsible. In fact, as McFarlane illustrates, members go to extraordinary lengths in their conjecturing to deflect the blame away from that with which they are familiar.

However, as stated above, extreme forms of violence take place against a backdrop of very routine and everyday forms of aggressive and violent behaviour which, in contrast, members do acknowledge as being perpetrated by their fellowmen. Using Buckley's terminology, it was interesting that McFarlane found a similar prevalence of 'rough' behaviour in rural Ulster as Buckley (1984, 1986) had discovered amongst the urban working classes.

This characteristically 'rough' behaviour rarely involves extreme forms of violence. Rather it incorporates forms of aggressive, if not always physically violent, behaviour which members mostly attribute to local 'hot heads'; that is young, mostly male, working class members of their own communities. In McFarlane's view this form of low-level violence is both expected and tolerated and it tends to be explained, quite simply, by members as just 'one of those things' which is to be expected with the, so-called, rebelliousness of youth and the first flush of masculinity. When such behaviour gets out of hand, however, and results in more extreme forms of violence which go beyond 'a good diggin'' then an additional type of members' explanation is given. For instance, when extreme acts of violence cannot be attributed to outsiders which is always members' preference, then such acts are publicly accounted for by the introduction of additional factors of 'drunkenness' or 'drugs' or the suggestion that the perpetrators were 'psychologically sick'.

Perhaps the most interesting finding from McFarlane's study was that members, within the context of their 'folk interpretations', show a marked preference for explaining aggressive and violent behaviour in terms outlined immediately above - as the work of 'hot heads' or the 'psychologically sick', or due to drink or drugs - rather than accounting for such activities in terms of sectarian extremism, division or conflict. Of course, McFarlane's study is specific to a rural community in Northern Ireland and, as such, he does draw attention to the possibility that:

... People's reaction to violence is also tailored in respect of to whom they are talking ... (and) ... Maybe the folk perceptions of violence in fact vary from place to

place, perhaps in response to the respective levels of violence in these places.'
(McFarlane, 1986: 194)

Members' perceptions of aggression and violence and what they consider acceptable forms or levels of physical force or punishment clearly vary from culture to culture. There is, as Heelas (1982) amongst others note, no definitive set of rules for categorising violent behaviour or for determining where we draw the line between what is and is not considered acceptable or legitimate. As such, in practice, we may only describe what members of particular cultural contexts consider to be appropriate for them. Given such an understanding, it is possible to draw interesting comparisons between what, as outsiders, we might consider to be an acceptable and appropriately 'civilised' level of violence - *a model of life as it should be* - and the reality of members' experience.

Perceptions of what constitutes legitimate aggression or violence or punishment are not only perceived differently from one cultural context to another but, it is the case, that much of that which may be describe as violent or aggressive behaviour is often purposefully concealed. Hence, as Fox (1977) suggests:

... Certainly communities differ and so may national characters in the amount of violence they tolerate or encourage. (Fox, 1977: 137)

Briefly, in relating immediate issues of aggression and violence to the ethnographic context of the Shankill Road community it is suggested that:

- First, one may not ignore the very public incidence of extreme forms of violence that have been both perpetrated and experienced by members of this community. As such, members' perceptions of what constitutes legitimate violence or punishment are almost bound to be different to many other Ulster Protestants who have not had similar and immediate experience of violent activities within their communities.
- Second, since the conflict has been on-going for a considerable time, one may speculate that the paramilitary presence within the community will

be both well established and pervasive. As Sluka (1989) found, living in a community within which there was a strong paramilitary presence had a considerable effect upon the way in which members perceived violence and their liability for the, often, violent activities of paramilitary members.

- Third, given Chagnon's (1992) view, that violence may be seen to shape a culture and, in effect, spin-off into all areas of members' lives so, it is considered, there might be a good deal of violent or aggressive behaviour which is likely to be concealed and, as Fox (1977) says, goes largely unnoticed as it 'festers away in corners'.

Such issues, clearly, need to be addressed with particular reference to the recent work of feminist sociologists who have commented upon the high incidence of, for example, domestic violence in Northern Ireland. This is a dimension of violence which, until recently, has been largely concealed by members and over looked by social scientists working in this field. It is the view of feminist sociologists, Edgerton (1986) McLaughlin (1993) et al, that many family problems let alone the high incidence of domestic violence within Northern Irish families have not only been concealed by members but over-looked by social scientists who, in working to an ideal model of what Irish family life *should* look like, have failed to grasp the significance of this problematic dimension of family life.

In discussions appertaining to the dimension of violence in members' lives the issues are clearly wide-ranging and complex and, perhaps, made even more complex since so much aggressive and violent behaviour may, as Fox suggests, fester away in communities largely unnoticed and unrecorded. Violence as a dimension of social experience, as is well documented, may be variously expressed, channelled, suppressed, repressed, and hidden from public view. As such, in the view of a number of eminent anthropologists, cited above, there needs to be a greater awareness that in the same way 'sex is pleasurable' so it might be argued 'violence is pleasurable'.

Indeed, violence may be seen to generate tremendous excitement and it is very easy, so commonsense let alone psychologists suggest, to teach us to enjoy it:

... We may not by nature be aggressive killers, but it is terribly easy to turn us into them. It is in fact so easy that it suggests that the animal must be rather ready to learn this pattern of behaviour in the same way that it is ready to learn language. (Fox, 1977: 138)

There is, indeed, much evidence in anthropological literature, Heald (1989), Chagnon (1992), Riches (1986, 1987), Haas (1990), Piot (1993) et al., which indicates the existence of very distinct cultural patterns in what are described as shows of ferocity, of aggression, spirit, or anger; in behaviours which tend to result in physically violent outbursts. Displays of such emotions are, it seems, rarely as unexpected or as random as might be supposed if looking at each incident in isolation. Indeed, when considered in context it is apparent that members adopt what appear to be culturally prescribed procedures for the display of such aggressive and violent emotions and that confrontations, of various sorts, are seen to follow recognisable patterns referred to by Fox, in particular, as 'inherent rules of violence'. These rules, he suggests, are clearly evident in the culturally standardised forms which fights, punch-ups, combat, a good diggin', a punishment beating, expulsion, and so forth are seen to take.

If such shows of aggression as listed above are considered to adopt culturally prescribed forms then, it might be conjectured, other forms of aggressive behaviour played out, for instance, on a domestic stage are likely to be similarly structured. The expression of aggression within the context of family life, for instance, might be understood as inherently rule-governed as, for instance, is the use of language. In other words, members may learn such behaviours - what is locally viable, acceptable, forgivable, and where to draw the boundaries - which may not be quite so random and erratic as we, from our so-called civilised perspective, might wish to believe. Indeed, there are many occasions when, for instance, the 'fighting game' might be best understood more as a highly ritualised event - played out, for example, merely to

assert power and authority – in which gratuitous violence and total destruction is not, and never was, the intention.

Social scientists such as Haas et al (1990) have concluded from broad ranging ethnographic studies that, indeed, societies may exhibit high rates of conflict and violence and yet there appears to be a fail-safe mechanism operating, akin to Fox's set of inherent rules, which stops them short of genocide. Rarely, in fact, is aggression and violence allowed to escalate out of control. For Haas et al this certainly appears to be the case in societies they have studied in some detail. Evidence, suggests that the prevalence of either interpersonal violence or outright warfare, or in some cases both, are seen to be quite fundamental to the very way of life of certain societies, yet, it never escalates totally out of control. They also noted, interestingly, that violence in these quite tempestuous societies - of which one might imagine Ulster to be included - did not appear to erupt or manifest itself simply because of particular economic, social or political configurations.

It has been argued by such writers as above; a view of peaceful or harmonious or non-contentious or non-violent social relationships as the norm simply does not fit the data. Such a view fits, perhaps, a model of life as we think it *should* be lived but not the reality of life as it is experienced. That outright warfare does not develop in some societies, with these often cited (Fabro, 1978) as examples of peaceful societies should not, as such, be taken as evidence of a lack of other expressions of violence, for instance, in members' inter-personal relationships. As Haas (1990) suggests, certain forms of violence common to particular societies tend to be quite controlled and localised. They are not, because of the very parameters within which members operate, allowed to develop into larger scale, potentially genocidal, blood feuds or revenge attacks. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that there may be implicit rules of the fighting game whereby violence of one sort or another is, in practice, not allowed

to escalate into violence of a completely different and potentially more destructive dimension.

In the practice of members' lives, therefore, it is possible that, as practitioners, they devise and refine culturally appropriate procedures which, in effect, allow for the diffusion of the uncontrolled escalation of violence. An example of such a social mechanism, as will be referred to later, is suggested by Girard (1972) who talks of the role of 'sacrifice' in controlling revenge. In various societies, he argues, a sacrificial ritual is performed which is endowed with such meaning for members that it routinely appears to have the effect of limiting the escalation or development of inter-personal conflict into larger scale assaults.

... If left unappeased, violence will accumulate until it over flows its confines and floods the surrounding area. The role of sacrifice is to stem that rising tide of indiscriminate substitutions and redirect violence into 'proper' channels ... otherwise the violent impulse (revenge) would remain unsatisfied. (Girard, 1972: 10)

The very performance of the sacrificial ritual, in Girard's view, deflects the *spirit of revenge* from persons to some sacrificial or other ritualised event. It is the *spirit of revenge* upon which violence is seen to hang and which, so Girard argues, prolongs the incidence, or escalation, of violence in society. So, perhaps, we might add to the suggestion above that, for some the act of violence is pleasurable, the notion that it may not simply be the act of violence which is so attractive but, equally, the feelings that a desire for revenge generate. Girard (1972) strongly suggests that:

... (it is) vengeance itself that must be restrained ... The sacrificial process prevents the spread of violence by keeping vengeance in check. (Girard, 1972: 18)

In modern society, it is the judicial system which, in theory, plays this role and serves to deflect the 'menace of vengeance' by depersonalising it; that is taking it out of the hands of individuals and putting it into the hands of the state. In this way the escalation of violence is checked by, in principle, keeping vengeance in check since, as Girard says:

... the risk of unleashed violence is so great and the cure so problematic that the emphasis naturally falls on prevention. (Girard, 1972: 19)

For the most part, as the literature suggests, interpretive collectivities reach agreements or formulate common procedures for both enacting and resolving violent outbursts. The ways in which violent interactions are played out, then, have a tendency to be highly ritualised and this minimises, in turn, the risk of uncontrolled spirals of vengeance. Also, as referred to by Gregor (1990), in certain cultural collectivities members develop and positively condone values which enable them to avoid being caught up in the round of revenge without losing face. In such cases, as Gregor continues, members tend to develop particularly anti-violent value systems that are seen to positively stigmatise quarrelling, boasting, stinginess, anger and violence while according prestige to generosity, gentleness and conflict avoidance. In passing, however, it should be stressed that only very few societies ever studied, the Buid, Semai, Xinguano, Eskimos, for instance, do have a recorded history of relative peace founded upon value-systems which are, fundamentally, against collective forms of violence. These societies, however, can not be said to be totally violence-free for violence is known to occur between members on an interpersonal level which, because of the mechanisms in place, is rarely allowed to escalate beyond its first expression.

So, for anthropologists such as Chagnon (1988, 92), Fox (1977, 82), Haas (1990), Heald (1989) et al, violence like sex is addressed as if a basic human, physical and emotional, drive which is largely expressed in accordance with members' shared corpus of knowledge and practices. And, when reviewing the anthropological literature there appears much evidence to suggest that violence, of one form or another, is common to all known societies and that as much for reasons of locality and history it is seen to take on very different cultural expressions. Hence, we might usefully talk about, as does Gregor above, a whole range of value-systems ranging from the predominantly non-violent to those positively condoning violence. Such a catalogue might, in theory, be substantiated through detailed study of what members,

themselves, value and respect within the context of their own lives; what personal qualities, for instance, they admire and positively regard in the construction of their social identity.

Given such a perspective, it might be noted that there are, indeed, any number of anthropological studies which lay stress on what are seen, by members, to be positive and highly valued personal characteristics; a 'good person', a 'real man', a 'strong woman' and so forth. Amongst the Xinguanos, for instance, a relatively conflict-free society, we find that the notion of a 'good person' is tied directly to a person's ability to avoid conflict, to rarely show anger, to avoid confrontations and be generally circumscribed in their behaviour. In contrast, there is much stress in certain other societies on qualities of 'fierceness', 'courage', 'bravery', 'toughness' or 'strength'. Amongst the Gisu and Tausug, for example, great importance is attached to qualities of fierceness and bravery and it is recognised within these cultures that man has an inherent problem in trying to control his anger. Hence, signs of truly brave and fierce men are signs of magnanimity; that is a man who, by choice, refuses to be violent or controls his anger in situations when it is clear that he has the capacity and would normally be willing to fight. Reference to this quality of magnanimity - a quality of 'greatness of soul (and of mind) which raises a person above all that is mean and unjust' (Chambers, 1972) - has some relevance also in the context of Ulster life for it is the stamp of the traditional *hardmen* stories of Ulster's working class:

... The hardmen would fight just to see who was the hardest. They fought for themselves and nobody else. On the docks if a fight was on it was just you and him. His mates would stop it if it didn't follow the rules. ... They were tough guys, working people, but they were tough. ...The hardmen had this code. "There was no dirt in it". A code of conduct, an unwritten traditional code, and this was accepted. ...Your reputation would be destroyed if it was broke ... People of my age (mid-fifties) who were in a good number of fights find it hard to take the brutality of these days. (Feldman, 1991: 52)

From a review of members' narratives, Feldman (1991) concludes that fighting and risking one's body was a way - if not the only way - of establishing a reputation within working class communities of Northern Ireland. Hardmen, because of their physical prowess and courage, commanded an impressive status amongst their

peer group that was further enhanced by their reputation as 'clean' and magnanimous fighters. Once they had established their position within the community and there was no doubt as to their willingness to fight these men, like their Gisu (Heald, 1989) counterparts, were equally magnanimous in their treatment of others. The tradition surrounding Ulster's hardmen is still the focus of many local stories and anecdotes which suggest characteristics, qualities of personhood, valued by members in their men folk. In Feldman's view, such characteristics had a particular significance in, first and foremost, being highly visible. Hardmen, themselves, were very visible characters. They did not conceal their activities or risk their bodies in secret. Rather, they became almost larger than life characters in their pursuit of a reputation.

During the early part of this century Belfast, in particular, was infamous for its breed of hardmen who, in turn, were considered to come from 'hard' places; from the Nick or the Hammer in the Shankill. Members of these communities were, by and large, proud to be identified with the tradition of hardmen associated with their localities and there is a wealth of local stories that reflect on the halcyon days of the hardmen. These stories, however, are now often cited as a contrast to the present-day reality of gunmen - paramilitaries - who are not, as Feldman suggests, so visible and who are identified by their weapons rather than their fists. What was once, mostly, the province of the 'fists' and enacted much according to a local code of honour is now, so he portrays, the province of the gun within which rules of engagement have changed accordingly. In the words of one ex-UUVF member quoted by Feldman:

... You couldn't be a hardman if you were willing to terrorise women or young people or engage in petty thieving. There is a terrible difference between that and the man who stands on his own two feet and says, 'Okay I'll take your best man and fight. (Feldman, 1991: 49)

The shift from hardman to gunman, in Feldman's words reflects:

... transformations in the cultural construction of violence and the advent of new utilities and styles of violent performance. (Feldman, 1991: 55)

With the introduction of the gun into the equation, it is suggested, there has been a transformation in the style or form of violence from that typical of traditional hardmen, the 'good diggin', to doorstep shootings and punishment beatings. This transformation in the form which violence takes is considered, then, to reflect relative changes in the character - qualities of personhood - of those now engaged in such violence. As popularly portrayed, the gunmen and the form of violence with which they are associated is seen as no more than a form of local terrorism:

... Paramilitary gangs have never stopped terrorising Belfast. Nancy Gracey (FAIT) believes in telling the world about what they do.

... Last April, FAIT got word that an organisation calling itself Direct Action Against Drugs had drawn up a list of people who were to be prosecuted by them. Over the ensuing nine months, six names were crossed off that list.

... FAIT during the time of peace was inundated with calls from frightened families who had come into contact with one of these new groups ...

... According to FAIT's latest figures, there are 307 people (201 Republican and 106 Loyalist) who have either been ordered out of their homes or are too afraid to continue living in them.

... The paramilitaries on both sides claim that, with or without the cease-fire, there is a continuing need for them to police their communities. (Freer, The Independent: 7.3.1996)

... This was the 30th paramilitary punishment attack in that part of west Belfast in the last year. There have been more than 210 others throughout Northern Ireland (since the ceasefire). Loyalists have been responsible for up to 100. (The Independent: 28.3.1996)

Of course, stories of traditional hardmen of the Nick or the Hammer are simply part of the cultural baggage which members fondly carry forward in preference, it might be said, to much other cultural baggage they prefer to forget. As such, although grounded in some historical reality, these stories now have an almost mythological status having been embellished in ways similar to heroic tales of classical Greece. Nevertheless, this is not to suggest that they are any less important in the context of members' lives for, it would be true to say, it is in the telling of such stories that one gains some idea of the importance attached to belonging to such a locality as the Shankill. The importance attributed to a sense of 'belonging' is perhaps best summed-up by:

... the 'bedrock' of the heritage of Ulster Protestants is their deeply held belief that they 'belong' here. They are as attached to their corner of the world as any people anywhere.

While might have some difficulty articulating the ingredients which make up their sense of 'belonging to Ulster', few observers could doubt it's reality, particularly as exhibited by the working class. (Island Pamphlets 9, 1994: 12)

The issue of violence within this ethnographic context - broadly defined as the Protestant section of the urban working class – is indisputably huge. There are no simple, let alone straightforward or uni-dimensional, explanations for what is now such a prevalent aspect – in all its many forms - of members' everyday lives for, if there were, the problem by this late stage would have been solved. Even beginning to grapple with dimensions of violence as routinely experienced in members' everyday lived experience is hugely problematic since:

- it filters through so many aspects of members lives,
- it takes on as many forms as there are ways of inflicting 'harm',
- it festers away in corners of members lives largely ignored by others and unnoticed by outsiders, and
- it manifests itself, on occasion, in horrendous public displays of punishment beatings, shootings and bombings.

And, in light of comments by anthropologists mentioned above, this is not to suggest that, as a people, working class Protestants are any more prone to violence or aggression than others, or that their experience of violence and the 'hurt' which it engenders is any less consequential in the context of their everyday lives. Due to historical factors, however, it would be true to say that violence, in its many forms, has perhaps shaped their culture in unfamiliar and, for outsiders, perhaps seemingly uncomfortable ways.

Family Life and Gender Issues

Within the previous section attention was drawn to recent studies by mainly feminist sociologists on family life in Northern Ireland. There is general agreement that prior

to the late 1980s much of the work which focused on gender roles, marital relationships and family life did little, if anything, to expose what are now perceived as quaint myths surrounding traditional family life-styles; of maternal satisfaction, of domestic peace, of an harmonious acceptance of husband/wife roles and so forth. Indeed, images of Irish motherhood as 'fulfilled', 'contented', 'silently caring', 'always making do', 'putting her children first', pervaded both romantic and academic literature. Such images, as recent research by McWilliams (1991), Morrissey (1991), Edgerton (1986), McLaughlin (1993) suggests, did not always accord with members' experience.

Most of this recent work has been concerned with domestic life within Catholic working class communities although, interestingly, it is now acknowledged that life was never and, indeed, still is not very much different for working class Protestant women who, if anything, have been even more invisible in the public arena. As Edgerton writes, the emphasis in the Protestant family was always considered to be more on mutual support of husband and wife so, in theory, it was assumed that there was a more evenly balanced relationship within the family. The reality, however, has been somewhat different and, for the most part, Protestant women have performed their role within the family much in accordance with a broader societal framework of female subordination. Hence, as Edgerton notes:

... the man was obliged to provide guidance in all things to his wife, and his wife was bound to obey.' (Edgerton, 1986: 62)

This imbalance of authority and power between husband and wife is summed up, in the recent Feminist literature, in statements such as:

... the patriarchal nature of Protestantism leaves out the imagery of women and in turn women become invisible' (McWilliams, 1991: 86)

Northern Irish women, in general, it has been argued have suffered much oppression within the structure of the family for two main reasons:

- First, male authority within society at large, which has been propped-up and perpetuated by the prevalence of patriarchal social institutions, has filtered its way through to the household. In the household, therefore, it is predominantly the male who is seen to command authority and power.
- Second, because of the practical need for extended family networks, a need which has if anything increased with the extenuating circumstances of The Troubles women, as Edgerton found, have been forced if not physically, in terms of domestic violence, then by practical necessity to toe the line.

With respect to this latter point, it is of interest that it was not until the mid 1970s, with the formation of the Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation and in 1981 the Rape Crisis Association in Belfast, that issues relating to violence in domestic contexts received any sort of airing. Again most of these issues were raised through members of the Nationalist sector of the population but, as more recently substantiated, the issue of domestic violence in both Catholic and Protestant working class family life predates the onset of the Troubles which, evidence suggests, have merely exacerbated the problem:

... Comfortable ideas about 'cheery' families supporting their members from without is an idealisation rather than an analysis of family life in Northern Ireland. ... The potential or actual use of physical force and violence was a lived reality for many women ... precisely because of the moral authority of the father/husband.

Women's conversations about their husbands often alluded to a fear that verbal aggression could easily slide into physical violence. This seemed all the more probable because, although domestic violence is officially illegal, it nevertheless remains socially sanctioned in a number of ways.

There are, too, special dimensions to domestic and sexual violence in the context of a violently divided society. ... men's access to firearms, the protection of abusing men through their membership of paramilitary and military organisations, and community bias against calling on police assistance. (McLaughlin, 1993: 564)

The dearth of direct reference to issues of domestic violence in Protestant family life, it might be considered, is due to a number of factors not least that attention of outside observers, academics, the media, has been drawn to more high-profile forms of

violence and, therefore, much of the routine everyday violence is effectively ignored. However, it must also be acknowledged that until very recently, with the formation of a number of local Protestant women's groups, much of what women simply took for granted in their family lives, including degrees of domestic abuse and violence, was never commented upon publicly. Indeed, as this study will explore, it was more important to maintain a semblance of public propriety irrespective of the hardship members had to endure in private. As such, the relative lack of comment on such issues is as much an illustration of how significant they are in members' lives as, in this ethnographic context, proof of their absence.

An interesting point raised by McWilliams (1991) in discussing domestic violence in Northern Ireland concerns the potential contradictions in members' - in particular women's - attitudes to violence and their tolerance of different forms of violence:

... Although women protested vociferously against the violence of the British army through the 1970s. ... they were unlikely to protest against the violence of their male partners in their own homes. (McWilliams, 1991: 84)

Clearly, members' versions of family life, of relationships with their marital partners, of expectations within the domestic context, of violence, will vary considerably even amongst those living within the same working class community. What does appear common to Protestant versions, however, is that within the context of family life women, irrespective of potentially abusive relationships and an almost invisible public role, have a very strong and respected domestic role as organisers, financiers, workers, and, primarily, as mothers. Even the most hardened of Feldman's gunmen - members of the paramilitaries - have an abiding respect and love for their mothers. However, when it comes to husband/wife relationships the story is, often, somewhat different as Lily, a Protestant woman, quoted below indicates:

... Like so many men here he thinks he can do no wrong - they think they're heroes. It was the Troubles done it to him, he turned and he was never in, and if you asked him where he was you got knocked from one end of the place to the other ... he got pleasure from hitting me. The women make jokes about it, but they can't talk about it like this.

... Most of the wives I know whose husbands are inside, they really hate them for the lives they've given them, the lives they've led with them being beaten and then waiting for the knock that's going to come to the door - if it's not the IRA, it's the cops or the UVF, coming to shoot their husbands.

... The wives' pray at night - 'please God, let him be lifted.' He didn't get sent down for long enough. He's never been done for half the things he did. He shot men easy, shot them dead in cold blood and even now he shows no remorse. He'll come out and do the same things again. ('Lily' In Fairweather et al, 1986: 310).

Such stories as this are not unique. Working class Protestant women, as do the men, tell very different tales about what it has been like over the years to experience life within a torn and conflict-ridden community. Members, for the most part, have borne the heavy burden of liability for what those within their community, whether family members or neighbours, have been prepared to do in the name of Ulster and 'No Surrender'. Now, in the late 1990's, life goes on in much the same state of play with just a few additional factors added to what appears to be a very similarly balanced equation. And, although we, as outsiders, might look to 'dated' literature and consider that surely life must have moved on a 'wee' bit given great changes afoot on the mainland, it is much the case that - irrespective of new model fringe parties, a string of women's groups, a grief counselling workshop, youth and community initiatives and, of course, fast-food outlets on the Shankill Road - 'tradition' continues to rule the day. This is much the case, it might be conjectured, for one very simple reason; that to move on signifies for this working class Protestant community, at least, that all they have endured from their own 'masters' to those across the sectarian divide has been misguided and futile and that, perhaps, hurts far more than anything physical:

... the Protestant working-class is presently undergoing a period of unprecedented transition, which almost warrants the label 'crisis'.

This crisis has engendered many different reactions within the Protestant working class community: a numbing sense of bewilderment, an increasing feeling of demoralisation, not to mention a deep resentment and bitterness. ... It's members feel that their deeply-held aspirations have rarely been acknowledged as legitimate by outsiders. Their 'case' has either been denigrated or ignored, or misrepresented by the media and government.

... that media and government continually view their community in a simplistic and stereotypical manner, with little attempt made to acknowledge the diversity of experiences and opinions. ... who could say whether opinions expressed along the Shankill Road necessarily reflect those of other Protestant working-class communities elsewhere throughout Northern Ireland. (Island Publications 9, 1994: 6-7)

Keeping up Appearances: 'All shined up to the knocker'

A Shankill Man: The 'authentic voice' of the people!

I SUPPOSE YOU COULD SAY that I was involved in everything that would sort of identify you as a staunch, hard-line, Loyalist or Protestant, whatever you want to call it.

I was born on the Shankill Road, G. Street. My mother's mother was the first tenant in that house. It was built, I'm sure, well over 100 years ago. My mother just died there, a few years back. She was 84. She'd lived in that house all her life. My father came from Sandy Row and my mother came from the Shankill and those are recognised as the two bastions of Protestantism or Loyalism. So, you could say I'm pure bred pedigree, as far as breeding goes!

My father was a life time member of the Orange Order and the Royal Black Preceptory. Obviously it's a lifetime of tradition behind the Orange Order and the Royal Black Preceptory and the Apprentice Boys, and I was a member of all three of those particular bodies. It was just a tradition, a Loyalist tradition, and there's been a lot of people and lot of young boys have joined the Order. It was more or less the thing to do.

I took a keen interest in it and I went quickly through the process and became what they call a 'Worshipful Master'. Then, there's a procedure you go through in the Orange where you sort of go through what you call the Arch Purple. You have to go through that before you can join the Royal Black Institution which I proceeded to do. I joined the Apprentice Boys also around the same time. Went up to Londonderry where you have to be, what they call, 'made'.

I remember I used to get into shop floor politics in the workplace and a guy said to me, 'How can you be a member of the Orange Order and vote Labour?' I says, 'What are you talking about? What's the Orange Order got to do with my political thinking?'

Well, I'm not a member of the Orange Order now. I've become disillusioned with the Order a bit over the years. But, I suppose, you would say years ago I would have been, maybe, classed as a bigot. I never would have harmed anybody but I sort of had this antagonism toward Catholics because I didn't really know any better. I was brought up in a Protestant environment and the workplace was ninety-five per cent Protestant and the schools I went to were a hundred per cent Protestant.

This might be a contradiction, but in all that I have seen, in all the suffering and the pain that the IRA or Republican movement has inflicted on me and my people, I should, maybe, feel more bitter now than what I did then. But I don't! You see, I've seen it develop and they have suffered the same way as the Protestants have suffered. I have grown to recognise over the years that they have the same problems, I have. I mean, Long Kesh Prison is full with working-class people, with very few middle class, and certainly no upper class people there.

Some of the best friends I have now are Catholic people. I have friends that other people wouldn't even know about because they wouldn't understand and would, maybe, try to use it against me. I don't try to hide it as such but, at the same time, I don't advertise it.

As I say, though, the Shankill Road people they're, probably, a different type of people. But, there was always a good sense of friendliness, neighbourliness and going in and out of each other's houses. And, if one person was in trouble there was always a lot of support.

Background to members' Appearance': Who do these people think they are?

In light of much research and other political and media interest focused on the working class Protestant community of Northern Ireland, there is considerable

information to hand which portends to describe salient aspects of members' way of life within this broad cultural collectivity. Indeed, it might be accurate to say that there is much which has been written which suggests 'who' it is that observers, be they academics or political commentators or journalists, think these people are rather than who these people know themselves to be given their experience of this way of life.

In this first section, attention is focused on how members 'see' and present themselves; that is 'who' they think they are and why, for instance, they choose to present themselves, or aspects of their lives, in the ways that they evidently do. This challenge might aptly be described, in a Goffmanesque (1959, 81) style, as concerned with the presentation of members' working class *self* in the context of their everyday lives. Following a perusal of ways in which members do present an appearance of their working class Protestant self, attention is directed to ways in which others 'see' or perceive working class Protestants and why, for instance, they may relate to them in the ways in which they so evidently do.

As such this section addresses somewhat grey and impressionistic areas of social life rather than any hard or observable facts. It is, essentially, about members' feelings about their way of life. What, for instance, does it feel like to live within a community like the Shankill? Is it all rows and fights, 'guns at the ready', drinking dens and 'queer good wee bargains'? What is like to live in a 'wee small house all shined up to the knocker' and why is this important? Does it feel safe living alongside known paramilitaries? Are they nice blokes, just normal people? Do the neighbours still keep an eye-out? Or is this the last place on earth anyone would choose to live? These are, for the most part, the 'filler' questions between the observable tiles of everyday life. The sort of questions we might address to those we think we know quite well which, even were we to ask the same of a hundred such folk, little might be said - at the end of the day - with great certainty. The intention

here, however, is not to look for sure-bets for there simply are none. Rather, the intention is to suggest - from what it is that members do 'talk' about within the context of their self-stories - some of the consequences of their using certain styles of *self* presentation as to how, for instance, others 'see' and, therefore, relate to them.

Through the medium of members' 'talk' - that is what they choose to say about themselves, when and where - we may highlight rudimentary reasons as to why members have often proffered an 'appearance' of themselves and their life-style which is somewhat distorted. Much due to this presentation of their working class self and, by implication, their working class lifestyle, it is suggested that members have, in effect, allowed outsiders considerable license in forming impressions or understandings of them. It has been - as many sources indicate - a long standing complaint on the part of members that others rarely seem to appreciate their needs, concerns and fears or empathise, let alone sympathise, with their position. As commonsense suggests, if members feel that outsiders are misunderstanding or misconstruing what is the reality of their way of life - their fears, their problems, their day to day concerns - there is a need, perhaps, to consider why outsider impressions are, in their view, so often distorted and unfounded.

Through the use of extended extracts of members' self-stories which are presented en bloc, at the beginning and end of each section, so that culture is, in a sense, seen to 'speak itself', issues outlined above will be illustrated through a discussion hinging upon:

- the context of members' 'talk' - is it 'public' or 'private',
- the content of members' 'talk' - what do they talk about, when, where and to whom,
- outsider, including other working class Protestants, views of life in this community; views which perhaps lead to the creation of distorted impressions and 'appearances', and

- reasons why 'keeping up appearances' is so important within this ethnographic context..

As Frank Wright (1992) commented at a recent Conference addressing issues in the development of Protestant areas, notably why certain very deprived and run-down Protestant districts had tended to lag behind similarly deprived Catholic areas in terms of development:

... In the past (and it still seems to happen in a lot of areas) people in Northern Ireland have got along well enough by treating their different feelings about threat and violence as taboo subjects never to be brought up in mixed company. In many ways this polite avoidance of issues serves both to make everyday life outwardly tranquil and to make sure that we never really meet each other's real feelings. Everybody lives in their own boxes, shares their own experiences of hurt only with their own people, but not with the others, so the differences carry on through generations. (Wright, 1992: 44)

'Public' Talk on the Shankill Road

For quite obvious reasons pertinent to this particular ethnographic context of the Shankill Road which will become clear as members' self-stories unravel, there are those within this locality whose voice - their 'public' accounts or versions of a way of life - come through loud and clear. Such strong voices are generally considered to contain or reflect archetypal cultural messages describing members' way of life by both:

- other members who, in practice, routinely make use of similar versions when talking to others or outsiders about their lives and,
- outsiders who, because of the relative 'loudness' of such versions, see these as typical and representative of members' way of life and as, for the most part, all one may need to know in order to understand these people.

The voice of a 'Shankill Man' introducing each section, here, is one such loud and clear voice that reverberates up and down the length of the Shankill Road. It is a voice that articulates what might be described as a very familiar version of a working class Protestant way of life in the Shankill. Certainly, all those living within this broad urban community would recognise this voice as one of their 'own' for it contains

many typical and familiar cultural messages which immediately identify the narrator as an urban working class Protestant from a hard-line Loyalist district. Very similar accounts might be proffered by those from Sandy Row, for example, or those now living in Rathcoole in so far as members of these different working class Protestant collectivities might choose to refer to such issues as:

- the nature of work relations and shop-floor politics
- unemployment and dealings with the 'brue',
- local schooling, childcare and attendant problems with 'youth',
- neighbourliness, local characters, extended family relations.
- prison visits, ex-prisoners' rehabilitation schemes, local politics,
- 'queer good wee bargains' to be had in the locality, protection rackets, punishment beatings, expulsions, and so forth.

Indeed, as further extracts of The Shankill Man's account will illustrate, this might be regarded as a somewhat typical and familiar version of urban working class Protestantism that is now well-documented by both academics and through media reportage of Northern Irish issues. And, indeed, it is versions such as these from which outsiders have, for the most part, formed their impressions of members' working class 'self' and life-style.

The voice of a Shankill Man - in its typifications, its overt maleness, its forthright style and authoritative tone - tenders an unmistakable version of much which members routinely choose to include in descriptions of their working class Protestant self. And, it is much because of the widespread use of such cultural typifications - a typical style and tone of presentation - as articulated by the Shankill Man, that much which is gleaned from this particular account is recognisable as:

- routinely reiterated by other members - both male and female - when talking publicly about 'who' they are and what they 'do',
- that which is most frequently cited by academics, political commentators, the media as a descriptor of a way of life, and,

- given this discussion, seen as illustrative of members' 'public' talk or, as previously described, their 'for talk sake' versions of 'who' they think they are and 'what' they do in the context of their everyday lives.

In suggesting that accounts of a way of life as illustrated by the Shankill Man are indicative of a particular style of 'public' talk it is important to consider the nature of the connection which therefore *must* exist between what it is that members 'talk' about in the context of their 'for talk sake' accounts and what, for instance, they may talk about in other – more private - social contexts and, thereby, reveal aspects of lived experience not perhaps so self-evident. Of course, even suggesting that there is any such disjuncture between forms of, for example, public and private talk begs all manner of questions. For example, to what extent are the very 'loud' and clear versions of a way of life, as articulated by a Shankill Man, representative of members' lived experience? Are these 'for talk sake' accounts, for the most part, simply articulated for the benefit of outsiders and for the sake of 'keeping up appearances' of a way of life? And, if this should be the case, why is it that members prefer to conceal or only indirectly reveal certain aspects of their lived experience? And, what might these other aspects be?

Before moving on to a consideration of these questions and, in reference to the earlier statement concerning the relative importance or weight attributed to particular public 'voices' within the Shankill Road community, it is useful to socially locate the person of a Shankill Man within the context of community life. First, it is noted that although this man is well known for his particular mode of work within the community, by choice he has not curried a high political or media profile. So, unlike various other Shankill Road residents who are now frequently sought out by high-profile government officials, academics and/or the media to publicly comment on events and policy and who, in doing so, have developed a 'popular political patois' this man may be seen, for the most part, to be unaffected by such outsider attention.

Even so, he has such status within the community that he regularly does meet with leading officials - government, police and army - and has contributed comments, statements, opinions that have been used by academics in various publications. Hence, although clearly preferring to keep a relatively low profile outside of the community, this man's assistance and advice is regularly sought by representatives of broader social, political and religious coteries. Notably, he was highly instrumental in bringing about the Loyalist cease-fire.

Currently, the person of a Shankill Man regularly attends meetings of Protestant and Catholic community representatives and clergy, is a member of the Combined Loyalist Military Command, is an executive member of one of the two fringe political parties whose headquarters are situated on the Shankill Road and, because of his extensive work on behalf of Loyalist prisoners, is now regularly consulted by members of law enforcement agencies and the prison authorities. So, it might be assumed, given this distinguished local track record, that the voice of the Shankill Man is one which speaks with a certain local knowledge and authority. It is, certainly, a voice which members throughout the Shankill community would identify as largely representative of their 'public' face; that is representative of 'who' they - openly and publicly - would say they are and 'what' they would say they did, or do, or might do in the future in view of local social, political and cultural activities. In other words, this is a voice which, very much, speaks for the public face of the community.

The significance attributed to such voices as that of the Shankill Man soon becomes evident when moving amongst Shankill Road circles. There is, for example, a relatively small clique of characters with considerable local status and acclaim whose names regularly crop-up in conversations. This particular man is a member of this relatively small local elite who have been 'active' in the community, in one guise or an other or, indeed, several guises simultaneously - as paramilitaries, community workers, political representatives, Orangemen - for a considerable number of years.

The Shankill Man, for instance, has been quite visibly active on the paramilitary and political fronts in the community for well over thirty years. And, as his narrative indicates, prior to this form of community involvement he rose to the high office of Worshipful Master in a local Orange Lodge.

Given the status accorded to this group of locally well known community and paramilitary 'activists', like the Shankill Man, it is somewhat obvious that they will be and, in practice are, influential contributors to a whole range of local decision-making arenas. Indeed, it would not be stretching the point too far to suggest that, even when such characters are not seen to actively participate in specific decision-making bodies that, nevertheless, their views and opinions - which includes the views and opinions of those they are known to be associated with - will be sought prior to decisions being taken which might effect life, whether social, economic or political, in the broader Shankill community.

As such, there is a general awareness amongst residents of the Shankill - and, indeed, this extends far beyond the confines of the geographical locality to, for instance, Shankill-born members now living in Glencairn, Glengormley, Rathcoole and beyond - as to who has real influence and into what particular spheres of community life, and further afield, that influence penetrates. In fact, it would be true to say that there is little doubt as to who should be consulted, when and where, and whose toes should not be stepped upon when any decisions likely to have a consequential bearing on the locality are made. Hence, although active members of the community often wear several 'hats' - for instance, as both community workers and local politicians, or community workers with strong paramilitary connections, or political representatives with paramilitary connections, and so forth - and one might suppose that their commitments will criss-cross, interweave and occasionally clash, it is quite evident that when it comes to what members 'do' there is little confusion or doubt as to who has the right to be involved in which decision-making arenas and

where, at the end of the day, members loyalties should – and will - lie. The underlying strain of influence running through all aspects of community life is, perhaps, indicated by the following comment:

... Paramilitaries were regarded as having been one of the founding strands in community development in Protestant areas. ... Paramilitaries were seen as having stepped in to fill a leadership gap, vacated by the established political parties. (Sheeran, 1992: 32)

As confusing, maybe, as this melee of cross-cutting, locally influential positions at first appears - with the same names seeming to crop-up, time and again, in any number of 'active' roles demanding what seem to be quite different and, maybe, conflicting sorts of commitment - it is soon clear, on the ground, that currently this does not result in too much obvious chaos and confusion. Rather, it seems, active members of the community may wear as many different 'hats' as they like so long as, in the practice of what they do, they know exactly where to draw the line; a 'line' which in having been, in a sense, consolidated over the previous six or seven years is described and determined by those with known paramilitary connections who have adopted locally influential political roles.

It would be quite fair to speculate, in fact, that although known community workers, of one sort or another, within the Shankill may not - unlike the Shankill Man - be seen as directly associated with any paramilitary organisation it is, nevertheless, quite certain that they would not hold such potentially influential positions within the community unless those known to represent these organisations agreed to their appointments. Within recent years this 'vetting' procedure was observed in action when the development agency, 'Making Belfast Work', wanted to appoint an official who would be based on the Shankill Road. Concern was expressed about the background of the selected appointee - a Catholic known to have been personally involved with a former Republican paramilitary - by representatives of one of the local political parties. There was little doubt at the time that these political representatives were speaking on behalf of Loyalist paramilitary groups with whom

they are known to be associated. Hence, although this was seen as an appointment which might, in principle, begin the process of breaking-down old prejudices and, certainly, the person in question was well qualified for the position, the decision was never likely to be taken on the basis of a curriculum vitae and new-model principles.

So, as suggested above, although a quiet man by what are now popular media/political standards in the community - there are, for instance, a number of colourful characters who regularly seek 'air' space and media coverage - the voice of the Shankill Man quite appositely represents that which has been identified by local members, within their publications, as the 'authentic voice' of working class Protestantism. It would be fair to say, therefore, that much which this man talks about in this well-rehearsed and very 'public' account of urban working class Protestantism is familiar social and cultural territory and, almost inclusively, would be regarded as representative of the way in which Shankill members - both male and female - publicly present themselves and their way of life. Of course, a million idiosyncrasies might be seen to drift in and out of individual accounts. However, for the most part, this still constitutes a version which is broadly representative of salient opinions, interests, expectations and activities of those living within 'spitting distance' of the Shankill Road and, quite likely, many working class Protestants living much further afield. In the introduction to a recent publication of The Shankill Think Tank, A New Beginning (Island Pamphlets 13, 1995), members talk of this 'authentic voice' of Ulster's Protestant working class:

... In late 1993 a Think Tank was initiated on Belfast's Shankill Road, and a broad spectrum of Protestant working-class opinion was represented by those who participated: ex-prisoners, local councillors, community activists, members of 'fringe' political parties, and concerned individuals.

The object of the Shankill Think Tank was to encourage an open exploration of views.

The end product of those first meetings, the pamphlet Ulster's Protestant Working Class, elicited an immediate response.

One reviewer wrote; "This is the voice of ordinary people, authentic not filtered or interpreted by intellectuals or academics. In so far as we do not hear enough of that authentic voice, or have it presented with scorn or ridicule, this little document is invaluable and should be read by everyone concerned." (Island Pamphlets 13, 1995: 26)

As a footnote to this initial and brief illustration of the style and content of members 'for talk sake' accounts it is important, perhaps, to acknowledge that by virtue of suggesting that such accounts serve a very immediate, loud, clear, public purpose - in practice, seen to categorically establish social identity and demarcate membership boundaries - that there must also be something else going on. And, indeed, there is much which is going on both in terms of members' 'talk' and, by inference, aspects of lived experience which are rarely, if ever, addressed directly within the context of 'for talk sake' accounts such as these. Of course, on occasion, by innuendo or simply because they 'forget' themselves - where they are and who they are talking to - members let slip odd details or impressions of an other side to their lives but, for the most part, this other side is rarely talked about directly within what they consider to be public contexts.

Clearly, much of what this other-side to their lives refers to concerns emotions and feelings arising because of the reality of members' experience; a reality which has been seen in the past to be greatly at odds with both the 'appearance' members suggest of their way of life and, by direct inference, the impressions which others have drawn and fostered. It is this disjuncture between the 'appearance' and what has, more often been the reality of members' experience - a disjuncture which they, themselves, now are beginning to appreciate - which has had consequential and quite detrimental side effects. For example, given a quite reasonable expectation that others will be able to form a clear understanding of what one means by what one says - what, for instance, is one's problem, how much does it really matter, what are one's genuine feelings - then, it might be argued, this constitutes a members' expectation which was bound to be considerably frustrated within this ethnographic context.

Public-to-Private: The disjuncture between 'appearance' and reality

By way of illustration of the way in which members quite routine 'for talk sake' versions of who they are and what they do have, by design, frustrated others

understanding of them reference is made to comments by several prominent Shankill members at the 1992 Conference, Community Development in Protestant Areas, organised by the University of Ulster. This was one of the first public occasions on which leading members of the Shankill community expressed a recognition of the need to, in effect, address and, hopefully, begin to redress the balance of popular opinion - an opinion largely fostered by the media - which they felt gave a 'negative assessment' of working class Protestant communities.

Over a considerable number of years, as speakers to the Conference suggested, there has been much misrepresentation of what life had been like - the everyday living conditions and concerns - in working class Protestant communities such as the Shankill. What, for instance, Shankill speakers had experienced through their formative years growing up in the Shankill, what they had endured with the re-development, how they had grieved and suffered through events of the Troubles, the enormous liability they had borne for local members' paramilitary activities, had rarely been openly talked about or made public. And, as such, a warped and distorted view of members' routine way of life had been propagated and allowed to grow. It was the intention of Shankill speakers at this Conference to, in effect, open very fundamental cultural 'doors' in the hope of achieving a level of communication which went beyond that of traditionally accepted modes. In putting aside what has mostly been seen as a members' cultural priority, that is to maintain a semblance of decent 'appearance' through the presentation of acceptable accounts of their working class 'self' and activities, speakers to this conference offered what were more realistic portrayals of members' experience of life during decades of social and economic deprivation confounded by the Troubles.

It was not until well into this current decade, the 1990s, that members began to appreciate the follies and negative spin-offs of what, in fact, were simply routine cultural procedures; that is routine ways of accounting for 'who' they are and 'what'

they do, or - as Goffman would say - the everyday presentation of their working class Protestant *self*. And, much because of the way in which members' expectations as to how to present themselves and their experience has been culturally fostered, so little attention was paid to the reality of much which was their social and economic lifestyle. In other words, the 'appearance' which members gave of their working class Protestant lifestyle was understood and responded to as an accepted reality.

During the previous seven years, in particular, there has been a small flurry of locally initiated publications and semi-biographical accounts which seek to redress that which the authors recognise as often quite gross misrepresentations of their working class Protestant experience. The Shankill Think Tank established in 1993, for example, has been responsible for a number of such pamphlets. This local group was set up with the intention, so the fly leaf of their publications suggest, 'for the purpose of stimulating debate within the Protestant working-class' (1993: 26). And, in reference to the earlier discussion, membership of this group is largely composed of those influential characters whose names are seen to crop-up in a whole variety of community contexts.

The upshot of this very recent - given the longevity of the Troubles - concern to address and, hopefully, redress the balance of popular opinion surrounding working class Protestantism is that, currently, there is a measure of local appreciation that much of the blame - if one has to attribute blame - for what is perceived as others' misunderstanding and misrepresentation of members' experience, is primarily due to the ways in which working class Protestants have more often than not presented an 'appearance' of themselves. Hence, in part at least, there is a sense that members recognise their responsibility for this situation having arisen. They do not blanketly consider, for instance, that it is simply a wilful lack of empathy, or understanding, or concern, on the part of significant others.

Referring back to the comments of various Shankill speakers to the Conference, *Development in Protestant Areas* (1992), several of the most salient and familiar aspects or features of members' presentation of their working class Protestant 'self' in the context of their public – 'for talk sake' - accounts might be, tentatively, explored. As will become evident, the issues which speakers do lay claim to as descriptive of a particular way of life are, indeed, glaringly apparent within the context of the Shankill Man's narrative as related throughout this thesis. First, as several speakers commented, there is a real reluctance on the part of working class Protestants to talk of their hardship in such a way as to be seen to be asking for help. Traditionally the so-called authentic voice - here described as members' public or 'for talk sake' version - of working class Protestantism allowed no room for statements of need. As a consequence, much which was members' lived experience was never talked about in such ways as might suggest either, an inability to cope with hardship or a request for help. This common cultural characteristic - simply a way of going about routine cultural 'business' - may be seen, in and of itself, to have exacerbated the reality of members' real and everyday experience of hardship within increasingly deprived economic contexts. It, also, may be seen to have been detrimental to the development or regeneration of working class Protestant areas in general. As Paul Sweeney says:

... There is an innate resistance on the part of Protestants to declare themselves in need. This strong sense of pride inhibits groups from approaching charities for help ... this reluctance toward charity and deference towards potential benefactors is a real issue in Protestant communities.

... The net result is that there are whole areas of Northern Ireland who seldom approach organisations such as charitable trusts or charities for help. ... Seldom will Protestant groups agree to align themselves with wider campaigns external to their areas even though participation in broader based organisations could impact beneficially in their own communities. (Sweeney, 1992: 9-11)

Two well known Shankill community members, Jackie Redpath and Gusti Spence, have commented at length over the years on what is generally described as members' deep rooted sense of individualism which, it is suggested, is often manifested in members *not asking no-one for nothing*. In part, this sense of

individualism might be traced back through the Protestant religious heritage; for instance, as seen in members' individual and direct relationship with God, and in view of a highly personal orientation to the expression of their faith. However, regardless of its historical roots, this emphasis on individualism is considered to have neither:

- facilitated any real sense of community nor,
- encouraged members to pull-together and organise life more communally.

The practical consequences of such a worldview have, as such, been quite devastating as regards attempts to alleviate social and economic hardship common within workingclass Protestant communities. With members reluctant to ask for help or even be seen to be unable to cope, so the 'myth' of relative affluence of this sector of Ulster's population was allowed to persist well beyond what might be described as other working class members' quite reasonable lack of tolerance of such deprivation. As Gusty Spence, in ways very reminiscent of Beattie's (1993) portrayal of his childhood in the Shankill, comments:

The bosses of the dark satanic mills straddling the Falls and Shankill did not enquire as to the religion of their employees. The bare-footed mill population, Prods and Taigs, kept their heads down and toiled for scab wages.

I can vividly recollect those Mill days just as I can recall coming home from the British Army after having fought a war and found myself with No House, and No Job, and No Vote and with a small family to keep. Some Protestant ascendancy!
(Spence, 1992: 69- 71)

And, as a contemporary middle-aged resident of the Nick recalls:

... my grandmother would have used the pawn shops as a means to keep her home going ... I suppose there was a lot of real extreme poverty about. A lot of hungry kids and all the diseases that would have gone with the hunger. Like tuberculosis and rickets.

There would have been a lot of children who just were not fed properly, so I mean it was a poor community. ... There was a woman on every street who delivered the babies. One woman on every street who washed the dead. And, a woman on every street who told your mother if anybody didn't go to school. ... Every one seemed to pull together and if one didn't have the other one gave. So, there was all of us who had hard lives but our street, what I remember most about it, was nearly the absence of men in it rather than the presence of men.

A lot of men didn't come home from the war and a lot of them who did were sick. So, women in my childhood would have been the strong people in the community and the one's who got the work when there weren't very many jobs. (Shankill Resident: Recorded Biography, 1996)

And, by way of illustration of both:

- members' sense of individualism; a sense in which everybody else, by definition, is different and, hence, the vast array of Protestant churches within the Shankill, and
- members often categorical understandings of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' characteristic of members' presentations of their working class Protestant 'self'; a 'self which, as the Shankill Man illustrates, is authoritative, sure-footed, well-grounded, established and, fundamentally, 'right', Jackie Redpath comments:

... I was brought up in an extremely fundamentalist evangelical tradition in the Shankill and Woodvale area ... there was no maybe's, no if's, no buts, it was either right or wrong and everybody else was wrong. And everybody else was different. (Redpath, 1992: 20)

So, just talking about what were, more often than not, quite miserable living conditions and 'grinding poverty' in the Shankill was never the norm. Indeed, members 'for talk sake' versions seemed purposefully constructed to avoid ever having to make reference in public contexts to the reality of much which was members' everyday reality of this particular way of life. .

Certainly much 'public' talk was always constructed in such a way as to be suggestive of certain strengths of character and personal authority - of individualism, responsibility, pride in one's Protestant *self*, in what one did, in one's locality - rather than allowing for any hint of weakness or vulnerability to creep in or signs of inability to cope with hardship, personal grief or hurt. As Beattie so appositely said, as quoted within the Introduction, to have complained was to be considered a 'wee snob' and accused of being ashamed of one's Protestant heritage and community. So members, by and large, did not complain publicly. They might be heard to moan and grumble quite a lot amongst themselves about the price of things, the damp, the neighbours, work mates of this and that, but moaning of this sort is quite different to complaining about one's personal hardships in a public context, as will be discussed. For the most

part, therefore, members simply learn when it is apposite to talk about issues which, for instance, indicate their potential vulnerability and signs of individual weakness and, by and large, such talk only takes place in private contexts.

As stated previously, the style of presentation of members' working class Protestant self in public contexts has simply exacerbated others' impressions of them as, for instance, hard-nosed, arrogant, too proud for their own good, as relatively well-off benefactors of all that the Protestant Ascendancy was seen to stand for and, thereby, as belonging to 'the people'. As one woman respondent to the 1994 Conference, held on the Shankill Road, commented:

... I am a person born on the Shankill Road; I watched the Troubles develop and I remember saying at the time there ought to be a better way of doing things. I watched young men on the Shankill Road going to spend their lifetimes in jail and I also saw the suffering of the wives and children left behind.

... Maybe the one thing I do resent is time and again I have been told I had it so good because I was a Protestant - I should feel ashamed to say I'm a Protestant because of all this crime I was supposed to commit. But being Protestant never opened any doors for me and within the Lower Shankill there's a vast need for help.' (Island Pamphlets 11,1995: 19)

And, similarly, as commented in the report, *Community Development in Protestant Areas*, 1992:

... There is a self denial of personal deprivation within Protestant communities. Moreover as a result of lack of appropriate research, pockets of deprivation were being swallowed up into the bigger picture as well-off wards statistically neutralise those areas in which poverty exists. Poverty in Protestant areas must be faced rather than hidden and denied.

... Deprivation in Protestant areas is a serious problem which has not been tackled, and which is invisible in government statistics. Politicians and councillors representing Protestant communities have not placed this problem on the public agenda. (Sheeran, 1992: 30, 60)

It was much because of members' reluctance to address the reality of their situation which, in Spence's view, perpetuated a blanket belief that 'We are the People' and part of Protestant Ascendancy. So, as he continues, like their 'Masters' working class Protestants were, for the most part, unquestioningly proud to be 'who' they believed they were by right of birth. Their Protestant heritage, as Redpath (1992) notes, categorically pronounced on what was right and what was wrong in the world

and there was little room, if any, for 'ifs' or 'but's' which would potentially contradict the 'appearance' which members presented of their working class way of life. Given such an understanding, when it comes to expressions or articulations, accounts or versions, of 'who they are' or 'what they do' there was little, if any, room for what might be described as fuzzy boundaries. In other words, one either is or is not one of 'us', one either does, at least has the choice of doing, what we do or one does not. And, it might be argued, that such a state of play continues, for the most part, to describe the reality of much of members' everyday presentations of themselves and their working class way of life. Hence, in large part, it would be true to say that although operating much upon 'appearance' it is, nevertheless, much the case that for working class members the issue of 'identity' - who they are and what they do - still remains fundamentally non-problematic. As Jackie Redpath summed up in his 1992 conference presentation:

... One feature of the Protestant community is that it is defensive. Defensiveness by its nature leads to negativity. We are all comfortable saying "No" - "No surrender" and "Ulster says No" and all that. It is the natural built in response.

... Another feature of the Protestant community is that it is individualist. The whole Reformation was based on individual salvation and it is an essential part of being a Protestant. ... The syndrome of "never asking nobody for nothing" is part of this. After all these years on the Shankill you still hear it.

And you hear it, most of all, from men who will be the very last to come to some Advice Centre about a problem. The first thing you will hear from them is, "I've never asked nobody for nothing." It really hurts them and they cannot do it. This links back to the question of resources and their allocation. By and large Protestants have not asked because of their pride. So, there is little perception of disadvantage. (Redpath, 1992: 27-28)

Distorted Impressions: Look at the houses! You'd know you were in the Shankill.

Although not wishing to over simplify what is seen to lie close to the heart of members' experience of their way of life; that is a fundamental level of contradiction between 'appearance' and 'reality', between the 'public' and the 'private' which is somewhat extreme and pivotal in this ethnographic context, it is apposite to suggest:

- First, that when identity, for all practical purposes, is routinely considered to be non-problematic - the 'We are the people' syndrome - then there appears to be less need for members and, certainly, less urgency to either

explain or justify themselves in accounts of 'who they are' and 'what they do' for, in practice, their 'for talk sake' accounts reiterate precisely this in each and every 'public' situation. Hence, they have developed a form of cultural delivery which might, colloquially, be described as that of a 'like it or lump it' style.

- Second, since members of urban working class Protestant communities like the Shankill, have not, recognised nor appreciated any inherent need to explain or justify themselves or their activities so, over the years, as media and academic sources indicate, they have fostered an impression of cultural arrogance and self-interest which members have often not, for reasons already touched upon, felt either the need or - given the ways in which they have become accustomed to present an appropriate public 'appearance' of themselves - felt able to correct, and
- Third, given members' preference to quite markedly distinguish between 'public' and 'private' contexts and, consequently, between the content and style of 'public' as opposed to 'private' talk, plus their use of very public 'for talk sake' accounts to, basically, shore-up an immediate sense of identity hence perceiving, less need for self-explanations or justifications so the net result is that, in practice, this leaves much interpretive room for others - whether other Ulster Protestants or rank outsiders - to fill in whatever 'spaces' they perceive in members' accounts.

Of course, commonsense suggests that inevitably there will be some disjuncture between the reality of experience and any account members give of that experience. This is taken for granted as, in practice, it would be impossible to describe every aspect of what occurs, what one did, what it felt like, and so forth. Hence, there is always room for poetic license in our descriptions and we both necessarily and quite purposefully leave space for others to fill in details. However, what is being suggested here concerns the *degree* to which members stop short in

their descriptions and, as a consequence, the amount of space or interpretive room they leave for others to fill in what are, more often than not, much more than just the few odd details.

Clearly, there are many reasons why members might be seen to do this, as will be explored later, but the net result is that Shankill members have a tendency to provide 'public' accounts of what they do and how they do it, which literally skip and hop and leap over many significant and salient details of the reality of their experience. One could even conjecture that they, in effect, culturally collude in the provision of more than just averagely distorted impressions of much that is their reality. And, indeed, what they often end up talking about - their 'public' versions of events and experiences - are somewhat wild, even vivid, misrepresentations in which far more than just small details are missing. In doing so, it is almost inevitable that much room for misunderstanding is created and, once created, it is clearly difficult to alter these first impressions. As such, images of working class members as relatively well off, as employed, as having a 'superior' lifestyle to their Catholic neighbours in the Falls, as beneficiaries of the Protestant Ascendancy persist even though the reality, for the most part, has been that of considerable hardship, poor housing, endless damp, an abiding sense of fear, and much personal suffering and grief. Of course, it is only outsiders who are taken in by this 'appearance' for, being a tight knit community, there are few details which stay hidden for long between neighbours.

The general impression which outsiders - the media, political commentators - have often formed of working class Protestants - of whom Shankill residents are merely one local 'variety' - is that of a backward-looking, traditionally-oriented people who are stubborn, proud, often intensely arrogant and self-interested and, perhaps the harshest criticism, that they have been no more than profiteers at the expense of their Catholic neighbours. There is little sense gleaned that these people care or are concerned for anyone but themselves - as the earlier quote from Pearce, in

the Introduction suggests - or that they might, on occasion, speculate on alternative futures, changes, or improvements. And, this impression, particularly in the context of Shankill life has been seen as in part substantiated, as Molly (Recorded Conversations, 1996/7) describes, by opulent and garish displays of wealth and possession:

- wee, small houses ... all shined up to the knocker ...
- big vases of flowers in every window ... up where everyone could see them ...
- must be, they want to show the people what they have ...
- always bought big presents ... all working at cleaning and you wouldn't have thought they had two-pence ...
- the son's grave ... big headstone up ... flashy flowers ... full of flowers
- wee kitchen houses and massive televisions ...
- a piano was swanky ... had to pay it in so much a week ...
- sure, all these frilly, flouncy curtains ... wall back ties ... fancy blinds ... all frilly-dilled up.

Members, in this way, afford an 'appearance' of themselves, quite irrespective of whether they have a job, have paid their bills or have 'money in hand' for the weekly rent, of being relatively well to do; of shiny door knockers, big vases of flowers, garish lamp stands, swanky pianos and giant television sets, opulent curtains with tie-backs, and all placed in such a way that everyone and anyone who passes by their wee small houses may catch a glimpse. All the small roads leading off the Shankill Road, today as of thirty years ago, have any number of houses which fit Molly's description and, in the main, most of the items - the 'queer good wee bargains' - she describes are bought from the various shops and outlets on the Shankill Road which stock a regular supply of plastic and paper flowers, of the latest fancy lamp stands, of china ornaments, knickknacks, flouncy curtains and frilly tie-backs.

Even at this most obvious of observable levels, this is a world in which one's appearance matters. And, this is not only reflected in the ways in which members

adorn and fit out their houses but, also, in the way in which they dress and present themselves when going 'public' - a night out, a social function, off to church - and getting the appearance right extends from the cut of one's hair to one's dander; the way one walks. Of course, there is another side to members' appearance that is not so much to do with shows of possessions but with shows of 'strength' in whatever form these manifest. Traditionally this side of personal appearance was the province of boxers and good fighters; the hardmen of the Hammer and the Nick who were famous throughout Ulster for their 'fists'. Nowadays, the rules of engagement have changed somewhat - as will be discussed - and shows of physical strength or presence are most evident amongst those who are members of the various paramilitary organisations. It is the reputation of Shankill paramilitaries which, in large part, is responsible for the impression outsiders often have, including Molly prior to taking up residence, of:

- **I was too scared of the Shankill ... terrified of it ...**
- **I imagined everybody had guns at the ready ...**
- **Every house had a gun, you know ... everybody was going shooting ...**
- **What in the name of God is she doing up the Shankill?**
- **Moving to the Shankill ... Is she going from bad to worse?**

So, Shankill life in its most immediate and observable form - the form most readily available through, for instance, media reports - presents an appearance of a way of life in which members are assumed to have a good bit of money to spare for fancy goods and possessions and where local law and order is now down to paramilitaries and gunmen. And, for the most part this impression, quite understandably, has rarely received a sympathetic response. So, it has been much in order to redress misconceptions as to members' relative affluence and a seeming disregard for law and order, that local community workers have tried hard, particularly on the economic front, to modify and in their view correct this distorted image of the community. Of course, this has meant having to put aside their 'defensiveness' and sense of pride and lend themselves to a form of self-explanation

in an attempt to encourage economic investment in the area. As stated in the introduction to the 1995, Health Profile of the Greater Shankill commissioned by the Making Belfast Work team, it was precisely because the Shankill, in particular, was seen as the heartland of Protestantism that it was also assumed to be 'in receipt of the material advantage of the Protestant Ascendancy' (1995: 1) by so many outsiders. This image was fostered not only by the presentation of what appeared to be favourable regional statistics but also enhanced, as already suggested in the Context, by quite biased media portrayals. As Dunwoody (1995) comments, by way of reference to the distorted impression statistics often give:

.... when examining deprivation in the Protestant community, it tends to be located in isolated small pockets or islands which get hidden in the larger statistics of the 'better offs' in the community. This survey has attempted to redress this by producing statistics which are relevant for these small pockets in West Belfast. (Dunwoody, 1995: 1)

Since, the mid-1990s, therefore, much attention has been paid to seeking investment and planning the regeneration of the Shankill area on a par with what members see as taking place in neighbouring Catholic communities. And, much in order to achieve this economic agenda, political and community representatives have needed to put aside their traditional cultural 'instinct' of *never asking nobody for nothing* and positively be seen to be seeking help from, almost, ever quarter possible.

The reality which lies behind the 'appearance' of a way of life in the Shankill - an appearance which members have, literally, fed and propagated through the medium of their 'public' talk and presentation of *self* and lifestyle - is hardly that which we might associate, therefore, with images of an ascendancy. Rather, as Jackie Redpath comments:

... The reality is, the Protestant community held power for fifty years ... given the social conditions in the streets of the Shankill Road, Silverstream, or wherever - "some 'ascendancy' many will say. (Redpath, 1992: 21)

It is also a reality, as described within the publication, Health Profile of the Greater Shankill Area (1995) which is quite shocking in view of the extent and depth of social and economic deprivation which currently exists within this largely Protestant district.

This was the first survey of its kind directly focusing on social, health and welfare conditions in this working class Protestant community. Additional details taken from the report are mentioned in the Context, however, below are just a few significant statistics as reminder:

- 40 % unemployment – males
- 35 % unemployment – females
- 78 % of households in receipt of Social Security benefits
- 30 % borrow money mid-week to get by
- 42 % of population suffering from health problems
- 83 % have no educational qualifications

The long-term effects of unemployment, social deprivation on a vast scale, major re-development and population shifts, and pressure on members due to the on-going conflict has, as Maureen Dunwoody (1995) so eloquently comments in her introduction to the Health Profile, meant that:

... For 25 years the greater Shankill has suffered, more than most other areas in Belfast, from the triple assault of economic decline, re-development and the Troubles. ... They have, in turn, reinforced a sense of siege and alienation as the greater Shankill sees it's future as being under threat.

During the past 25 years, the Shankill itself has undergone the largest housing redevelopment programme in Belfast and experienced all the social and environmental trauma involved. Allied with the widespread and insensitive disruption of redevelopment has been the impact of structural economic changes. At the heart of these changes has been the decline of the linen, shipbuilding and engineering sectors.

Added to the problems of redevelopment and economic decline are the far-reaching effects stemming from general societal changes. ... (and) What has made this cocktail of problems even more vicious has been the impact of 'the Troubles.'
(Dunwoody, 1995: 14, 15)

As Molly, below notes, the reality behind the obvious and observable appearance of members' way of life is a veritable cocktail of activities and preoccupations which, for the most part, have simply enabled members to scrape through a life of considerable hardship by, literally, the 'skin of their teeth':

- like Martha, out cleaning every night ... she never was in the house, out every night for a start at five ...

- all frilly-dilled up ... and all on benefits ... It wasn't right to be cadging or sponging, as my mother would have said ... sure, now, everybody's doing it!

- that wee tiny house they gave me ... the smell would knock you down ... it was frozen ... the width of your yard, it was the width of one flag ...

- Lena says, ' We were all reared in a house like this ... this is a normal house!'

- and, sure, compensation claims ... there was a wee fellow, Tom ... called him Paddy Compo because he'd that many claims in ... Like it's all a racket ...

- Aye, there's some queer good wee bargains up the Shankill ... chocolates ... cigarettes ... cameras ... She was out taking orders on Christmas morning!

Although brief, this section has been designed to reflect a relatively obvious and observable disjuncture between the appearance of a way of life and the reality of members' experience; this being the disjuncture between impressions of Shankill Road people, since 'beneficiaries' of the Protestant Ascendancy, as being relatively privileged and well to do and the lived reality of much social and economic hardship, high long-term unemployment and major health problems. In view of respondents' narratives this section might be summed up by the following shift in opinion from an impression of this community gleaned from the 'outside' to lived experience 'within' as expressed by Molly:

... Oh, you would know you're in the Shankill! ... Wee small houses all shined up to the knocker ... you could hardly get in passed the televisions ... all these borders and the curtains and the plastic flowers to match. ... Every time I was up the Shankill, I was shaking till I got down to the Albert Clock again ... I think I imagined everybody had guns at the ready. Everybody was going shooting!

... Then I started to come up and go to the Co and the wee shops ... the people are right and friendly ... Billy (says), 'Look mum, if I won the pools and had the money to buy a house, I wouldn't buy a house anywhere else but the Shankill. The people are the kindest people that I've ever met in my life. They are the best people I've ever known.'

Molly's Version: You'd know you were in the Shankill, wee small houses all shined up to the knocker!

YOU SEE I WAS ALWAYS AFRAID of the Shankill. I was terrified of that Shankill. I would have come up in the bus or a taxi, you know, or I would have taken a car up.

Oh, I was terrified of the Shankill. Terrified of it! Whenever Billy told me he was going to live there I said, 'Billy, the Shankill! In the name of heavens what's taken you to the Shankill Road!'

God! Go passed that Peter's Hill! I was terrified going passed that Peter's Hill. Unity Flats! They're all houses now. I was terrified going down there. Every time I was up the Shankill I was shaking till I got down to the Albert Clock again. I was all right once I got down there.

'Billy,' I said, 'whatever took you to the Shankill?' Then he says, 'Look mum, if I won the pools and had the money to buy a house, I wouldn't buy a house anywhere else but the Shankill. The people are the kindest people that I've ever met in my life. They are the best people I've ever known. If I won the pools I wouldn't move out of the Shankill.'

'BUT LOOK AT THE HOUSES!' Margaret L., she says, 'Look at that! The very outside, look at it! Artificial flowers hanging outside their door! Oh you would know you're in the Shankill!' See, they've all these borders and the curtains and their plastic flowers to match. These big artificial flowers all to match. As their rooms is blue you see the big blue flowers! It's that stupid looking. And these big blue flowers, you know, there's no blue flowers!

Sure, it used to be they always used to laugh about the wee small houses of Shankill or Sandy Row, all shined up to the knocker! And a big vase of flowers in every window! Big and up where everybody could see them, you know? They were never pushed back. Up at the front. Or, a big fancy vase turned out with whatever flowers there. All turned out. They're not turned into the room. All turned out. They want to show the people what they have. Must be!

Now, there's Martha. Oh, she's a good girl. Awful, awful good. She was another one always bought big presents. Oh, they would have embarrassed you. They all worked at cleaning and you would have thought they hadn't two-pence, and do you know what she bought the one? A Royal Albert tea set for Christmas. And thought nothing of it, you know! And like, Martha was out cleaning every night and she'd been doing that job for years and years and years. She never was in the house, out every night for a start at five or half five.

And, the son's grave, my god! Big headstone up. Then there's a big vase, a big urn thing from Martha and Jim. Then there's another one from his own two children. Big headstone, flashy flowers, full of flowers and everything else.

Then, I remember somebody saying they went in to look with the insurance man or something. Now remember this was years ago. He says, 'The wee tiny houses, you know, the wee kitchen houses and the massive televisions. You could hardly get in passed the televisions, the size of them.'

And sure, years and years ago, when I was a child and they all had big pianos. A piano was swanky, considered swanky! And, here, Olive's mother, always talking about, 'I got my Olive, a piano. Had to pay it in so much a week.' But that was considered swanky.

A piano was considered great status just like that girl having the big flowers up her window! And, sure all these frilly, flouncy curtains and wall back ties, and all these fancy blinds, all frilly-dilled up! And, all on benefits! They expect it! It doesn't pay them to work and they haven't the pride to go to work now.

I WAS IN DESPERATION coming out of hospital and the Housing Executive gave me that wee tiny house in C. Street and I had to go into it. When I got the key there was an alcoholic who'd lived in before. The smell would knock you down! I was so ashamed of it. If you saw the size of it, I'm not joking you, it was like half a sitting room. I used to say to Lena, 'This is dreadful.'

There was a wee porch and you opened the door and come into the living room and there was the wee place into your working kitchen; a wee small working kitchen. Then you opened that door and there was a wee tiny hall and your bathroom was off that. It was frozen. When you opened your backdoor, your wee kitchen window was here. And the width of your yard, it was the width of one flag. At the bottom where the bathroom was, there was a wee tiny space. Your coal bunker was in it and your door for to go out into the entry. It was so tiny and it was draughty.

You talk about small! Lena says, 'We were all reared in a house like this!' I remember her bringing her niece, 'Ach, a lovely wee house. This is a normal house.' To me it was terrible and Lena's daughter came she says, 'This is what I went to live in first and had a wee pram and all in.'

‘YOU WERE TOO PROUD!’ isn’t that what they say too about the Unionist people? You know, the Unionists were more upper class but the poorer people wouldn’t be seen to be asking. It wasn’t right to be cadging or to be sponging, as my mother would have said.

I remember my father died in March and mother was always saying, ‘Now I have a bottle of gas to get and I’ve this and I’ve that.’ So I says, ‘Why don’t you put in for ... ?’ You didn’t call it social security then, it was something else. ‘What? I’m not going to apply for Outdoor Relief!’ Outdoor Relief she called it. This is what they called it away donkey’s years ago.

It came to Christmas and the girl I went about with, her mother was in the Legion, she says, ‘Molly, did your mother apply for the Legion for anything? Get me the number of her pension book.’ The next day she took it into the Legion and they got four bags of coal and the woman’s section gave her £2. Well, here, the man who worked in the British Legion worked in the Dole Office. And he came up one day, ‘Mrs Johnson, your pension, is this all the pension you have?’ He says, ‘You could apply for this or that.’ ‘Oh, no’, she says, ‘I wouldn’t apply for Outdoor Relief!’

He says, ‘Mrs Johnson, it’s what you’re entitled to. You’re entitled to that.’ ‘No’, she says, ‘I wouldn’t apply for it.’ And she was only living on way below what she should of been living. He says, ‘Look Mrs Johnson, you’re lifting your pension? Aren’t you entitled to your pension?’ She says, ‘Oh yes, I’m a widow, like, I’m entitled to that.’ He says, ‘You’re entitled to income support’, I suppose you would call it, ‘You’re entitled to that just the same as you are the widow’s pension.’ So she took it then.

YOU SEE, THE PROTESTANT PEOPLE DIDN’T but the Catholics went round to the doors, round everybody’s door at nights. Benefits take-up. It was men come round who had studied all what you could get. The man, Frank, worked with me told me that! They come round and they asked him. They studied all what you were entitled to. I’m 12 years left work and Frank told us then about them coming round their doors. I says, ‘But how come the Protestant people doesn’t come round and tell you?’ But they don’t go round the doors. Even now you have to go and ask them.

Nobody did it for the Protestant community. Only did it in the Catholic areas, they looked after their own and they would bring in the forms and these ones would sit and fill them all in for them. Fill all those forms in for them to get what they needed.

They're only starting it now in the Shankill. They didn't do that all those years ago. So you wouldn't have known what to claim for. For you didn't know. I never even knew these benefits were out! So they're only starting now to 'Take -Up'! Now this is more recent that the 'money' was came in, I think it was March, and now if you put in at a certain time it's what money they have. Sure they'll tell you that over in west Belfast every halfpenny was lifted. Their money spent! But in east Belfast it's all not used up. There's money lying there that they haven't used up because the Protestant people didn't know what all you could claim for. They hadn't put in the same claims!

SURE, NOW, EVERYBODY'S DOING IT! I was on invalidity when I had to come off work. I wasn't able to work. But you have to do your six months or twenty six weeks or something on the sick, you know, you go on the sickness benefit. Then, whenever you've that 26 weeks you go on invalidity. That's what I got for years and years (and) it was after that I applied for mobility. You have to be under sixty-five to apply for mobility, that's if you've difficulty walking.

Was another wee girl out of the church she asked me how did I get my car through mobility? She had got mobility but was keeping the money. So, she went and got one. Says it's a lovely wee car, power steering! Everybody's doing it.

Olive's on invalidity. For years! And Harry's on it. Olive has a pension out of where she was working. Out of the Council. She had to go away for to pass a doctor for it the other week. I used to say to Billy, where does she get the money? You know how does she get the money? It was then she said, you know, 'I got my pension.' 'Oh aye', she says, 'I've a hefty work's pension.' And she's on invalidity. She was away down there, just not many months back. And, Harry he gets DLA now. He's away down the Centre every day and he's getting paid for that!

And sure claims! My goodness, if they fall now they're up the street to see if there's a kerb up to see can they put in a claim! I remember the paper fellow telling us he was drunk one

night and came home and the toilet was out in the yard. He broke his glasses and he went up to the Lisburn Road the next day till he saw a flag up, you know, sitting up! He took a photo of it and a wee hole. And he put in a claim and got so many thousands for falling down. And he fell in his own yard, going to the toilet! Like it's all a racket.

Sure there was a wee fellow, Tom, and all they ever called him was 'Paddy Compo' because he'd that many claims in! One wasn't paid out till another went in! So many claims he had for his back and for something else. He was working and he fell down a hole and he got this and that. I remember Frank telling me about all the claims. He said about somebody falling, you know, got hurt in work. They says, 'Oh quick, send for an ambulance.' And the man says, 'Never mind an ambulance send for - some solicitor's name - O'Dwyer. They'll put in me claims. Never mind the ambulance but send for O'Dwyer for to get the claim in!'

That's one you hear, 'Oh isn't that a terrible tragedy. They'll get a queer compensation for that!' That's the first thing they say! 'Get a queer lot for that! That's thirty thousand for him, and that's so much for him.' That's true like. That's not a lie. They count up what they're gonna get. That's right.

AYE, THERE'S SOME QUEER GOOD WEE BARGAINS up the Shankill, isn't there?' At Christmas I says, 'Edith will you see if can get me a wee box of sweets or something for the wee woman next door.' The wee woman who used to put my bins out. Then she got, you know, them 'Rocher'. What do you call them? Chocolates, those 'Rocher'. She got me two boxes of those Rocher. I says, 'Where do you get them?' 'Wee man stands selling them outside the Post Office for - was it - one fifty a box?' I says, 'Oh had he a wee stall up?' 'No,' she says, 'he had no stall he was just selling them there.'

She got me the two boxes for three pound. They weren't the big boxes but, still, even the small ones are more than that aren't they? She said, 'I'll see if he's any more. But there, he's selling them outside the Post office.' I said to Margaret, 'Look what Edith got me.' She says, 'There's some queer good wee bargains up the Shankill isn't there?'

Then that time Olive says, 'By the way, there's cigarettes on the go! On the go in the Road.' But she didn't tell me where she got them. She says, 'I can get them.' I think it was £10.

Definitely it was £10 I gave her. But I only ever got the one'st!. But, I remember one of the cleaners, a big woman that goes into the Centre, she used to be a cleaner in our place. She come in and got us all cigarettes. Two hundred for, oh I forget now, but it was very, very cheap. I says, 'Do you think it'll be alright to take them off her?' You know I didn't want to take these and the police come questioning. 'Not at all', she says!

She told me, then, about Harry getting the cameras. Harry said himself, he went up to the Bookies and they were selling these great cameras. He bought two dozen of them. You see he was into the Bookies to back a horse and instead bought two dozen cameras. For he laughed about it! Well, Olive got the cameras for she gave the wee girl next door one for Christmas. She said she was out taking orders on Christmas morning!

BUT YOU WANT TO HEAR THE THINGS THEY DO! I was in the Centre one day talking to the girl when this big fat fellow come in and Gillian says to him, 'What do you have today?' And he had track shoes and jeans. And then another day I was there and he came in again and he had these T shirts. Gillian says, 'No, my Paul wouldn't wear them unless they're 'names', you know, these 'names'... !' But she looked. 'Oh', she says, 'they are very good quality. Ach,' she says, 'he has different things from time to time.'

But sure, the man was deliverer to an outfitters, you know, a gents' outfitters across from them. He delivered all the big cartons so, you know, he delivered them outside and the shop girl was carrying them in. She couldn't carry them all so she carried two or three boxes. So, he put them down, she came out for the rest, and they were away! Somebody put them in a lorry and went on. Yes, somebody in a lorry stopped and just shoved them in and went on!

You get an education don't you? They say the policemen, they're worse than anybody!

Qualities of Personhood: 'It doesn't pay to be bird-mouthed'

A Shankill Man: In public and in private

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN INSISTENT. Had confrontations even in work with foremen and rate fixers. I was forever warring with them. I rebel against authority maybe. I don't like anyone telling me what to do. I don't know if it's inherent with most Shankill Road people.

My father was fairly strong-willed and a very determined man which my mother may have been also. But my father was really strong-willed. If he didn't like you, he didn't like you and he was a great judge of character, he didn't make too many mistakes. A very clean-living man. He didn't smoke, didn't drink. Very seldom used a swear word. Very, very clean-living. I'd say they just don't make them like him anymore. Very, very true to my mother. I could never be half the man that he was in a lot of those respects.

I've always had confidence in my own view-points and confident in my ability to express myself and always, always, prepared to say what I think needs to be said. No matter who it would offend. I have put myself out on a limb - way back in the early days, when it was probably dangerous enough - and I just said what I thought had to (be said). It's never done me any harm because I think, and again I don't want to sound egotistical, but I think I'm held in fairly high regard, with a bit of respect.

I GRIEVE A LOT IN PRIVATE. And I grieve a lot when I'm on my own at night. I still haven't been the same person since my mother died. I was very, very close to my mother. Yes, every single night in life I was in my mothers' and when she died something went out of my life. I felt that life would never be the same again.

I go places where I had been with my mother and with my father, just on my own, I just go there to be there. I visit the cemetery on my own. I don't even go with my sister or anything like that. My brother never goes anyway. But I go up very, very regular and keep the grave and put flowers on. But I always do it on my own. Don't bring anybody up with me or go with anyone. I prefer it that way. It means I can have a wee cry if I want.

Even yet I can hardly speak about it without getting emotional because mother thought so much of me. I stayed up in the hospital with her, I stayed at nights. One of the Sisters in the ward said, 'Look, I think your mother rests better when she doesn't know that you're there sitting beside her bed. I think, maybe, it would be better if you went home.' That was the night she died. It near killed me, the fact that I wasn't with her. But, apart from whether I was there or not, it left a gap in my life that could never be, well, I mean, there's nothing that you can't put right, or you can't sort out, only death.

EVERYTHING CHANGED THEN. There were shops I always went in and I would have said 'Oh my mother would like,' you know, 'magazines.' She was a great person for the Royal family. If I'd have saw anything at all remotely pertaining to the Royal family I'd have thought, 'Oh, my mother would like that.' And there were just shops that I couldn't go into after my mother died. I never set foot in my mother's house after she died. I just couldn't handle it. All meaning seemed to have gone out of my life. And I still grieve.

I grieve over not only my mother but over close friends. One of my friends died in my arms on Christmas Eve. It was a terrible shock to me because I wasn't with mother when she died and I wasn't with my father when he died and, basically, that was the first person that I saw dying. It was a terrible, terrible experience. But I do feel deeply. It's not hard to feel deeply with any death, with anyone close to me, you know.

BUT, I MEAN, THERE ARE PEOPLE who have suffered losses that I don't honestly know how they cope! You know, I think the loss of a child is far worse. I mean, with the loss of your parents, that's sort of natural. Your parents are expected to die before you. But

when I look at people who have lost young sons or they're imprisoned or stuff like that, I don't honestly know how they cope with it.

Members' garrulousness: 'Always prepared to say what I think needs to be said!'

One of the first impressions gained of working class Protestants of the Shankill is that they are a highly garrulous people; a community of folk who love to talk, to have their wee yarn, to have their wee moan, to partake of the 'crack'. Much for reasons of this quite evident garrulousness it is often assumed that members will and, indeed, do talk about anything and everything that touches their lives; that, perhaps, there is very little which they prefer to 'keep under wraps', to remain silent about, or to which they only refer indirectly.

Members' willingness to talk is reflected in the ease with which one may acquire verbal responses to enquiries during research. Indeed, members readily offer their versions of events and their opinions to the extent that one is rapidly swamped with comments, stories, anecdotes and much everyday wisdom. And, in no time at all, it is possible to amass a veritable volume of such data from encounters with members in the Co-op, the tea shops, out buying their doughnuts, in bars and social clubs, at the betting office, in front-rooms of political offices, at community service outlets, in the Shankill library, at morning prayer meetings at any one of the numerous church halls or strolling round the old Shankill cemetery. Wherever, in fact, one ventures up and down the Shankill Road, in and out of shops or bars or cafes, round by the Nick, across the Road to the Hammer, up to the library and the cemetery, there is inevitably someone with a few words to say, a wee yarn to tell, a bit of local gossip to wile away the time. And, for the most part, this is simply the way of things.

The sheer volume of verbal responses, alone, it might be suggested is highly indicative of a Shankill way of life - if not, indeed, amongst most urban working class Protestants - in which, as obvious as it is it must be said, members simply love to talk.

As such, it is apposite to suggest that *garrulousness* is a common social characteristic of these people; from pastors to paramilitaries, local politicians and community workers, shop girls, barmen, cleaners, single mums, homehelps, the young, the old, and so on and so forth. Hence, if seeking a comment, an instant response to a crisis, some views and opinions on any aspect of life at all, one never has far to go to gain a response. However, this garrulousness although suggesting an openness and willingness to share local knowledge is, perhaps, deceptive for, as Simmel suggests:

Though society is conditioned by the capacity to speak, it is shaped by the capacity to be silent. (Simmel, G. In Wolff, 1950: 349)

Much of this section is concerned with what might be described as members' silences or, more accurately, with aspects of lived experience which members routinely choose not to speak about openly in the context of their 'public' talk - their 'for talk sake' accounts - or which they only refer to indirectly through the use of various forms or styles of communication. It is suggested, that aspects of members' experience which they wish to conceal - often those bearing a heavy burden of personal liability and potentially the cause of much shame - are purposefully and effectively concealed by, first and foremost, what appears on the surface to be their natural garrulousness. Hence, what is observed as an openness and willingness to talk gives an immediate 'appearance' of members as proffering an enormous wealth of information; that, indeed, they are ready and willing to talk, or tell stories, offer anecdotes or gems of wisdom, on all manner of subjects. But, as suggested previously, members' way of life is predicated upon contradiction and difference which in this context is reflected in a vast and, often imponderable, difference between presentations of *self* - particularly seen as *qualities of personhood* that are the stamp of *real* men and *real* woman in this community - in the context of public 'for talk sake' accounts and much personal experience which they know, only too well, contradicts these ideals.

In the previous chapter, it was suggested that members' 'for talk sake' accounts, for the most part, afford an impression - an appearance - of a way of life which, in practice, enables them to conceal much which is known to be the reality of their lived experience. As such, members have allowed others to form impressions of their lifestyle and socio-economic welfare, for example, which appear somewhat distorted. We might wonder why members have allowed this state of affairs to persist for so long when, living the life as they do, they have been only too aware of the reality of their situation. In order to gain some insight into this dilemma it is useful to reflect further upon Simmel's suggestion that the art of concealment - of secrecy or silence - in the practice of members' lives offers them an immense *enlargement of life* (Wolff, 1950).

An 'enlargement of life': Members presentation of their working class 'self'

As Simmel suggests, when closely reflecting upon members' way of life we might discover a completely *other* world alongside that which is most commonly and frequently referred to in the context of their public 'for talk sake' versions of that way of life. Discovering what may exist within this *other* world is much dependent upon our ability to expose that little bit more than perhaps members would voluntarily choose to reveal within their public talk. We might begin to unravel this complex by:

- First, considering what it is that members do routinely reveal about their working class Protestant 'self' and the qualities of this self; qualities, for example, which members admire in themselves and in others, the value placed on certain personal characteristics and how this reflects in everyday activities, and the problems members face in living-up to these standards. In other words, what in members' view describes an appropriate 'appearance' of one's working class Protestant self?
- Second, looking beyond this immediate appearance for evidence of aspects of their 'self', and activities within which these aspects may be reflected, which members rarely refer to within the context of their 'for talk sake'

accounts but which, on occasion, are revealed in 'private' talk, or through forms of indirection; by innuendo, anecdote, metaphor, through joking or grumbling.

By way of a brief illustration of what it is that Shankill members routinely reveal about their working class Protestant 'self' we need look no further than accounts provided throughout this thesis by the Shankill Man and Molly. First, looking to the extract introducing this section, several factors are immediately apparent which, of themselves, are quite characteristic of Shankill members' public presentations of their working-class Protestant self. Of these factors, perhaps the most significant concerns the general feeling or appearance which members hope to present of their self to others which is, quite clearly, one of considerable strength of character, of resilience and forbearance. There is little, if any, room in members' 'public' talk for even the slightest hint of vulnerability or emotional weakness. Indeed, even to hint that one is sensitive to the existence of such qualities requires much self-justification as the Shankill Man illustrates when talking, in particular, about his mother's bereavement. Grief is something which he, for example, only expresses in private for that is, as he says, 'the way he prefers it'. Indeed, he spent a considerable time - having exposed this sensitive issue within a long conversation - in explaining why he became so emotional at the mere mention of his mother since the relationship had been very close. So, looking at his account, several qualities of this public 'self' might be indicated:

- I've always been insistent ... I don't like anyone telling me what to do ...

- my father was fairly strong-willed ... a very determined man ... a great judge of character ... he didn't make too many mistakes ... very clean living ... seldom used a swear word ... didn't smoke, didn't drink

- I've always had confidence in my own view-points ... prepared to say what needs to be said ... no matter who it would offend ...

- I grieve a lot in private ... just on my own ... I prefer it that way ... It means I can have a wee cry if I want ...

And, briefly, in turning to Molly's account throughout this thesis, various strong and resilient qualities are consistently referred to as descriptive of the working class Protestant self. Particularly, using her more biblical phraseology, she talks of qualities of endurance and long-suffering; of those who have remained firm in their principles to the very last, and those who have tolerated considerable misery and hurt yet done so with quietude and dignity. As an example she talks of Ann S., a 'long-suffering wee wife' from the Shankill Road:

... They all say Ann S. is a long-suffering wee wife for no one else would do what she's doing ... her husband drunk, maybe go out on a Friday night and not come back till Monday and she doesn't know where he is.

... One night she went up to her friend in her cardigan, lives a good bit up the Road, and he left her off and says I'll come back for you at half ten. Came half ten, half eleven and he still wasn't there. Oh she says, 'He's went on home and she walked on home in her cardigan. And, when she got down she was standing outside her door on her street until half five or half six in the morning. She's suffered him over the years.

It is apparent, when moving from one cultural context to another that members choose quite variously which aspects of their activities and experience to reveal and which to conceal. Hence, the Shankill Man is seen to talk at some length and with considerable self-assurance about qualities of personhood, of character, or of self, which he considers he possesses which, almost by definition, are seen to describe him as a 'good' example of a working class Ulster Protestant. As such, his version as recorded illustrates members' language of 'revelation' in so far as it mostly contains - if not, totally - that which members choose to reveal about themselves. Indeed, had it not been for the length and informality of conversations plus, perhaps, the fact that this man was aware of my family connections with the Shankill and I had been introduced to him through a mutual acquaintance, it is almost certain that his mother's

death would not have featured so prominently in our conversation and that, perhaps, he would not have allowed himself such an emotional response. In contrast to this language of revelation, therefore, lies Simmel's explication of the language of concealment evident in members' use of silences, secrecy, or forms of indirection to communicate certain sorts of local knowledge.

It is considered that use of forms of concealment are often so fundamental to a way of life - so taken for granted by members as a medium of expression of certain aspects of experience - that, as Bellman (1984) notes, the language of concealment itself may be seen to determine much which members actually 'do' in the course of their everyday lives. As he continues, a lot of that which is of considerable importance in members' lives, often constituting major cornerstones of lived cultural experience, in practice is never addressed directly.

As such, certain knowledge which might lie at the heart of members' experience, which may be quite fundamental to their cultural practice and, indeed, be seen to almost drive what it is they 'do' and how they do it is, perhaps, only ever referred to indirectly through the medium of metaphor, allusion, joking or innuendo that is, if it is articulated at all. Much of social life, in Simmel and Bellman amongst others' view, is found to be systematically and routinely permeated by such hidden messages which, once deciphered, describe much which is the reality of members' experience of a way of life. Hence, hidden messages hint loudly at an enlargement of social life beyond that which is immediately observable or which, for instance, members may voluntarily choose to reveal about the lives they lead.

Why it is difficult for outsiders to appreciate the existence let alone the various dimensions of this *other* world is somewhat obvious for it takes members a life-time of experience to get it right. From birth, members are learning the rules - the appropriate procedures - for either revealing or concealing what it is that they know as

the lived experience of their culture. They learn when and where it is appropriate to 'talk' about certain activities; how they should talk about issues, who to talk to and who not to talk to, for how long and in how much detail they should talk and, importantly to whom they should listen. While learning appropriate procedures to articulate – 'talk' - their knowledge they also, significantly, learn when and where it is appropriate to deal in silences, in ambiguity and in all the varied and various forms of dissembling and concealment of local knowledge which exist.

Using forms of concealment of knowledge, in any cultural sphere, becomes itself a routine social skill that members, metaphorically, imbibe and regurgitate almost as a by-product of their socialisation. But, although beginning on a long and convoluted social career as a by-product of socialisation, it is clear that routine and regular use of forms of indirection, of secrecy or concealment, actually begins to structure the form which social relationships take within any social context. When only, for instance, referring to aspects of lived experience through oblique or indirect forms of expression or, maybe, purposefully remaining silent and keeping one's activities secret, so others begin to respond to certain sorts of knowledge or activities in particular ways.

One immediate and quite pertinent example, for the purpose of illustration, is the routine concealment by a significant number of working class Protestant women of domestic violence. Clearly, few Shankill women still living with abusive partners will choose to talk freely let alone openly about such abuse, even to members of their immediate family, for the repercussions are likely to be severe. And, even when they have left such relationships it is not usual for such knowledge to become 'public'. Of course, that is not to say that details are not communicated to immediate family members and otherwise disseminated. However, by and large, the circle amongst whom such experiences are 'talked over' remains very small. Members are incredibly wary of who gets hold of what information and still, by and large, have great

difficulty in 'handling' this particular sort of knowledge. Indeed, once the initial hurt of a broken or troublesome relationship has passed and the issue is not longer regarded as sensitive it will, quite probably, only be referred to indirectly in the context of a wee moan, or a joke, or through the medium of members' 'crack'.

In her experience, for instance, Molly (1996/7) notes that 'it doesn't pay to be bird-mouthed' - that is to conceal such knowledge - but, it would be true to say, that this is precisely what most women in these particular circumstances continue to do. Indeed, in her particular story, one that is heard time and again in the Shankill - and, of course, in most other similar communities - she remained 'bird-mouthed' about all manner of abusive aspects of her domestic life for years. She did not talk about the physical batterings, the drunkenness, misuse of wages, humiliation in front of neighbours, with either her sister, her elder daughter or close friends. And, by virtue of concealing the abuse, as best she could from family, neighbours, the police, so a distinct set of relationships were, effectively, structured within which the abuse, paradoxically, flourished. As Molly, herself, recounts:

... I didn't want anyone to know he was arguing with me. I wouldn't let anyone know, you see. Quiet! I wouldn't answer him back, for I was afraid to answer him back, and I used to sit and tremble for fear of him. (Molly: Recorded Conversations)

So, through the use of a language of concealment - through being 'bird-mouthed' in Molly's terms - much which is members' experience of a way of life, might be effectively hidden from the gaze of outsiders. And, unless members voluntarily choose to reveal what it is that they 'do' - whether directly or more subtly through various forms of indirection - then whole areas of lived experience which might be fundamental to the structuring of key social relationships and, therefore, to the gaining of an understanding of such relationships might be hidden.

However, there is a catch - as Bellman (1984), Simmel (In: Wolff, 1950), Sharrock (1974), Piot (1993) amongst others have indicated - for it is the case that much which members attempt to conceal or remain silent about is meant to be known.

As Simmel so appositely said, '*secrets are meant to be told*' and, in his view, their content is known by those who, at least theoretically, are not supposed to know and who would routinely deny that they do know if challenged. In the example given from Molly's narrative it is clear that, although she did not talk directly about her domestic difficulties to anyone, others must have known; her children and neighbours who would hear the shouting and in putting two-and-two together correctly interpret the situation, her work-mates who would witness repairs to her uniform and recognise the signs, and her friends who, within the context of their personal conversations, would pick up clues and pointers as to what was going on at home.

So, there is much which members might never refer to directly which, nevertheless, is well-known - common knowledge - to those who know what to look for and how to read the signs. And, indeed, it might well be true that most of what members choose to conceal - to simply allude to indirectly or keep silent about - is not only known to others but, so it is suggested, *meant* to be known. The question arises, therefore, as to what real purpose is achieved by members who, in Sharrock's (1974) words, 'own' knowledge that is not, nor perhaps was ever meant or intended to be, secret at all? The answer, in Piot's (1993) view, is not to be found in terms of what is considered to be the 'content' of such secret or concealed knowledge but in the 'right' to talk about it. As he says, what is pivotal:

... is not so much knowledge of the secrets as the right to tell them. (Piot, 1993: 357)

If it is the right which members have to reveal knowledge which is crucial then, as Sharrock and Piot agree, what is pivotal has more to do with the nature of the relationship of members to that knowledge than with the content of what is known. As such, in the normal course of events, members adopt familiar and routine procedures for telling or informing others of their secrets and much, if not all, of this secret knowledge is likely to be already known or at least soon will be. Hence, it is

not the content of this knowledge which members regard so highly, rather it is the right to reveal it, to talk about it, to generally make use of it and, in effect, make it public. In Sharrock's words, the importance of members' concealed knowledge lies not so much in what it contains - the content of members' secrets - as in 'ownership' rights to that knowledge which determine who has, and who has not, got the right to make use of it, as and when they choose. A brief extract from Molly's account illustrates the salience of this point:

... And, there was me afraid to say anything in case she'd think I talked or I was the one that talked! ... I thought I was the only one knew! You see I wouldn't even have mentioned it to you if you hadn't have known. You know I wouldn't have said because it's not my business you know.

... Like I wouldn't even have said to Michelle! If Michelle came in, I wouldn't say to her 'How did Jimmy get on?' Like I wouldn't dream of that sort of ... But I wouldn't, like I don't even know if Michelle knows I know. If I met Michelle now, I wouldn't say anything to her.

To reiterate: there is often an *other* quite distinct dimension underlying what is the appearance of members' immediate and obvious way of life; an other dimension underlying, for instance, the immediate and public presentation of their working class Protestant self. This dimension is as real to members as that which is overt, observable, and routinely talked about in the context of their 'for talk sake' accounts even though, as Bellman (1984) says, it may only ever be referred to indirectly through what he describes as *deep talk*. When conversing with Shankill members there is little doubt as to the existence and importance of an other dimension. Indeed, much which they are seen to do is predicated on an awareness of that to which this *deep talk* relates and without a certain knowledge of its' contents members, let alone outsiders, could not make the necessary sense of what they experience and observe.

So, given a general assumption that members of the Shankill, like members of any other cultural collectivity, in some way or other, will enlarge upon what is

perceived as their immediate and observable reality through the use of a 'language of concealment' this raises a number of questions relating to this particular ethnographic context of the Shankill Road:

- First, what sort of *self* knowledge do members routinely conceal from outsiders? This issue brings into focus particular qualities of personhood that members consider are descriptive of an appropriate presentation of their working class Protestant self and, in contrast, those qualities - as reflected in certain sorts of activities - which are considered to be inherently 'shameful'. Much of this argument hinges upon a primary distinction members' make between that which affords pride and that which is shameful in the practice of their lives. This dichotomy is almost as fundamental an organising principle running through Shankill members' practice - seen to shape much of what they do and how they do it - as the basic nature/culture dichotomy considered by Levi-Strauss (1958) as a primary organising principle of mythology.
- Second: There are any number of questions which relate to how members achieve this routine concealment of aspects of their knowledge. For instance, do they have a distinctive language of concealment? Do they use certain forms of indirection; a 'poetic' style, a 'joking' style, a 'moaning' or 'grumbling' style, to articulate their secrets. And what, if any, are the penalties for 'loose talk'; that is for using or revealing knowledge which one 'owns' in inappropriate ways or, maybe, making use of knowledge - for example, gossiping - of which one does not have 'ownership' rights.

The content of members 'self' knowledge: 'Oh shame, I was so ashamed!'

When shifting from members' 'public' talk to more intimate or private talk it soon becomes apparent that there is, indeed, an other quite distinct dimension underlying the appearance of Shankill members' immediate and observable presentation of their working class Protestant self. In most public talk, as stated previously, members are at

pains to maintain an appearance of their working class Protestant 'self' as, fundamentally, a mixture of positive strengths. That is, of being seen to possess, in both their person and activities, a number of locally valued 'qualities of personhood' including:

- a sense of individualism and independence of thought - sometimes depicted as a touch of rebellion against authority; the police, the brew, their foreman or supervisor at work,
- a strong and insistent will - apparent in the often dogged completion of 'tasks' such that, what is seen to get started is, also, seen to get finished,
- self-assurance and confidence - qualities which are manifest in practical competencies and in what one is seen to know, think, and feel about anything and everything,
- endurance and forbearance - evident in members remaining 'firm' in what they think, feel and do, irrespective of trials and tribulations along the way,
- magnanimity - a quality most apparent in the mythology surrounding traditional Shankill hardmen and, today, to a certain extent expected of that local 'elite' of ex-Loyalist prisoners-cum-fringe politicians-cum-paramilitaries-cum-community workers and, if evident at all, seen in members' ability to rise above pettiness and all that is considered mean-spirited and unjust.

Of course, these are simply a few of the very positive strengths of character which Shankill people have traditionally valued and in terms of which, even today, they would most likely couch a description of their *self*. And, if looking for a rationale as to why, for instance, qualities such as these - of forbearance, fortitude, strength, insistence, magnanimity, endurance - have become so important, the answer might be sought in a members quite fundamental understanding of life as predicated upon much hardship, toil, making do, grief and hurt. Life, for Shankill members - like their

Falls Road neighbours and others - has never been easy. Members, as such, do not expect it to be easy or trouble free. They have, as such, an almost in-built expectation that round the next corner, if not presently, there are bound to be difficulties, problems and much personal hardship.

Such a routine expectation as to what life has to offer, coupled with a traditionally strong, if frustrated, Protestant work ethic and individualistic ethos leaves, in practice, few options as to how members might express their *self* at all; that is as a viable and worthy human being. Indeed, it is incredibly problematic as to how, for instance, to foster a credible appearance of self - one which lives up to one's own and others' expectations as part of a so-called privileged sector or ascendancy - when it is blatantly obvious that one is 'poor', is probably living in damp if no longer rat-infested dwellings, has few work prospects and much financial insecurity and, certainly, until relatively recently was not taken at all seriously on the broader social, economic or political platform. Indeed as one Shankill respondent stated in the context of a long and detailed recollection of the early days of the Troubles:

... Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist area, whatever you like to call it now, we didn't call it those things in those days, we were just a Shankill family from the Shankill Road and extremely British ... I didn't even recognise the fact that we were poor as a child because there was so much love around us from the adults that I don't think we, mostly, knew that we were poor. ... And, I don't think even the kids in the street who didn't have that would have considered themselves poor either because we didn't know what rich was.

... So, I never understood the Civil Rights movement properly because I didn't know why the banner said Civil Rights for Catholics, One Man, One Vote. I thought about my uncles coming home from war ... who actually lived in my grandmother's house ... and they didn't have a vote. They didn't have a job. And, they didn't have a house! (Shankill Resident: Recorded Biography, 1996)

Recognising what has been a real contradiction running through much of members' experience - that is, being identified as aligned with the privileged sector yet, in the context of everyday experience, not being seen to gain any real material or social benefit from this alignment - one might speculate that at least some dignity or self respect might be salvaged within this strange and contradictory situation if seen to present a particularly stalwart, hardy and strong sense of selfhood. That is, the

presentation of a working class Protestant self that, at least in the context of members' public talk, is not seen to contradict - by complaining or criticising – that version, or those, with whom members are identified within the broader Protestant society.

So such qualities of personhood – of self - as suggested above have a very special place within members' presentation of their working class Protestant self. And, much in order to maintain an appropriate 'appearance', members will conceal whole realms of other experience which might appear to contradict this appearance of a way of life. They will, in other words, engage a language of concealment; using forms of ambiguity, indirection, dissembling, 'veiled speech', 'wrapped words', secrecy, when referring to aspects of their lives which, in being interpreted or construed as shameful, are seen as offending members' common sense of an appropriate presentation of self. Such forms of 'talk', as Brennis and Myers (1984) suggest, *keep a lid on things* that if referred to directly would expose whole realms of potentially contentious or shameful activity.

Drawing together salient pointers toward an understanding of Shankill members' presentation of their working-class Protestant self:

- First, it is evident that what have been listed as valued *qualities of personhood* were never designed - if there ever was a grand design - to make members' lives easier. Rather, there is a basic premise upon which working class Protestants of the Shankill organise and put into effect their lives - a premise, so fundamental and taken for granted, that it probably constitutes a cornerstone of their socio-cultural being - which, quite simply, is the knowledge that *life is hard*.
- Second, these are people who, in being quite realistic and pragmatic in their expectations, have little expectation that life will, or even that it should, be easy. Indeed, it is as much taken for granted that there will always be hardship of some sort or other to endure, as it is that the next

family row or dispute is just waiting to take place. In starting from such a worldview, there is little if any room for idealism or romanticism and, therefore, one does not perceive any hint of such in valued qualities of personhood. Rather, these qualities exhibit, if nothing else, a members' appreciation of the basic reality underlying their way of life; that life is and will, in all likelihood, continue to be *hard* and one's personal experience will be fraught with many personal hardships and disappointments.

- Third, qualities of personhood - what it is to be a 'real' man or woman - seen as reflecting members' knowledge of a way of life that is, almost definitionally, bound to be *hard* and fraught with difficulties are constantly referred to in both members' self stories and tales of local 'heroes'; accounts of local hardmen, paramilitaries, of those who have been 'saved' and, thereby, are seen to have triumphed over considerable adversity. On many occasions - as the Shankill Man illustrates - members choose to talk about this positive aspect of their *self* quite openly. They talk about what they have done, their activities, and cite this as evidence of various 'strengths' and an appropriate appearance of their working class Protestant self. And, on occasion, members do not refer to these aspects of their self quite so directly but prefer to do so through the medium of their joking, their banter and their grumbling. In doing so, they effectively indicate and highlight how well they are able to cope with life's routine hardships and, by implication, what strengths and qualities of personhood they possess.

It is very apparent amongst members of the Shankill, as is illustrated in both the Shankill Man's reference to the bereavement of his mother and in the various trials and tribulations of Molly and her friends, that when members can no longer cope with the reality of hardship or the hurt which so often follows in its wake - when they can no longer maintain an appropriate appearance of *coping* - then, rarely, do

they publicly confront their problems, seek assistance outside of their immediate kin and, thereby, attempt to effect what is seen by others as positive change. Rather, they choose to cope with personal problems privately and, for the most part, the preference is always to remain 'bird mouthed' about domestic or personal problems which members feel incapable of sorting out for their selves. Indeed, even in the context of members' prolific moaning and grumbling there is no premium gained if one is seen to suggest an inability to manage one's affairs and cope with life's routine difficulties. Asking for help, suggesting one was in some way or other incompetent or unable to cope, would as such be a direct contradiction in terms and defeat the purpose of the 'moaning' exercise; an exercise designed primarily to make public one's better qualities not one's weaknesses.

There is, as such, a very low tolerance for signs of weakness in members' sense of, and presentation of, their self. This is a community of people, in fact, who are extraordinarily hard on each other and do not suffer fools or weakness particularly graciously. Indeed, it might be said that they have very great difficulty - primarily due to the emphasis placed on the qualities or strengths listed - in handling what they perceive as 'weakness' in their self, let alone when confronted by such weaknesses in others. There is, as a result, a markedly low tolerance for public displays which depict an inability to manage one's affairs or cope with what are, after all, just the same amount of hardship and hurt which everyone has had to deal with for decades. And, much because of this low tolerance of any signs of weakness, considerable effort - through gossiping, cold-shouldering and the like - is injected into purposefully distancing oneself from those whose behaviour suggests any such lack of strength of personhood. Of course, there are those within the community - various local Pastors, community workers, therapists and counsellors - who, taking it much upon themselves, see their 'job' as sweeping-up the weak links by providing necessary personal and domestic support - running messages, making sure medication is taken' listening and consoling, and so forth - and thereby, any too obvious or observable

signs of 'weakness' are, effectively, concealed beneath the proverbial community carpet.

It has always, so members attest, been much the way of things - that is both routine and taken for granted - that members will try their best to conceal from public gaze or discussion all manner of activities which they know others will label as signs of such weakness as referred to above. These range from routine everyday problems which members have in managing their finances, paying bills, providing for their families to the very real and widespread psychological problems - agoraphobia, anxiety, depression - affecting numerous members of this battle weary community. Only very recently, for instance, was any attempt made to quantify the number of members who, for instance, had not been outside of their front door for years and the number who were, currently, taking prescribed drugs to relieve symptoms of anxiety or depression. Members rarely, if ever, choose to talk about such aspects of their lives for these suggest weakness and this, if nothing else, is a cultural context in which weakness is equated with shame. Hence, primarily in order to maintain an appropriate appearance of their working class self, members quite purposefully conceal much of what they 'do' in the experience of their everyday lives. Concealment, of one sort or another, is therefore a quite familiar cultural routine. A routine or procedure which, one might argue, has become quite an art form amongst Shankill members who - it might be suggested - live most of their lives with several cards carefully stacked up their sleeves in the realistic expectation of the next 'worse-case' scenario just around the corner.

The local community worker, Jackie Redpath, mentioned earlier talks about this cultural syndrome in the context of members' attitude to pride and shame. He makes use of this important conceptual dichotomy in much the way members talk about their pride, for instance, in being Shankill 'born and bred', in being seen to cope

and manage their affairs and, in contrast, shame which is attached, for instance, to not being able to look after oneself or one's family. As he comments:

... when you cannot look after yourself there is a degree of shame in it. It is all tied up with pride and shame.

... (The consequence of individualist thinking) is to look after yourself and those closest to you. ... Individualism also leads to a lesser sense of community identity. ... There is much more fractionalism in the Protestant community. ... (also) apathy was one of the greatest problems in Protestant areas. Protestants were said to moan and complain, rather than act. (Redpath, 1992: 27)

As a final comment, here, it might be suggested that since members appear to have difficulty in confronting what might be perceived, by their self and others, as potential 'weakness' - that they choose, if possible, to conceal aspects of experience; problems, hardships, difficulties, if these can not be handled by themselves - that this has, in practice, compounded the narrow and self-oriented view of their way of life often described in terms of members' *sense of fatalism*. This fatalism, described as pervading or underlying the general worldview of Ulster Protestantism, is seen as manifesting itself in:

- a backward, rather than forward, orientation to development and change which is linked to a strong sense of traditionalism, and
- a members' introverted – inward looking and defensive - siege mentality.

It is, perhaps, this common description of working class Protestants as fatalistic which is most interesting given this discussion. Such an attitude, usually described as quite negative, is generally taken to suggest an inability on the part of members to focus on change since they are, if anything, resigned to the lives they lead; to the paucity of everyday existence, to living with a certain rancour or bitterness toward their neighbours, to having an abiding attitude of critical complaint about life in general. And, indeed, given this over-bearing sense of fatalism so often ascribed to members, it seems that their only saving grace might be an ability to struggle through life at all.

This emphasis on fatalism has provided, at best, a very dour and grim impression of what it is to be a working class Ulster Protestant. For on the one hand, it gives an ominous impression of a way of life in which much emphasis is placed on complaining and moaning, yet little effort is seen to be put into improving members' lot. And, on the other hand, it affords an even darker impression of a working class Protestant *self* as essentially negative, self-indulgent and backward looking; a self which, perhaps, is not really deserving of others' understanding let alone sympathy. This somewhat distorted impression - an impression which, clearly, is being addressed throughout this thesis - of working class Protestants has been persistent and is annually fired by what are perceived by outsiders as archaic displays of bowler hatted Orangemen.

Forms of Indirection: From 'poetic' prose to having a 'good wee moan'

Up to this point much has been suggested about an *other* dimension to members' lives which is, in effect, an enlargement of a way of life which is routinely observed and talked about in the context of members' very public 'for talk sake' accounts. In order to communicate their knowledge of this *other* dimension members use, as referred to by Brennis (1984), 'deep talk'; that is forms of indirection or 'veiled speech' or 'wrapped words' which constitute a language of concealment. Of course, for those in the 'know' - other members who can read the signs and interpret the messages - very little of the 'content' of members' secrets are in practice concealed. Rather, what is important in this 'context of concealment' is in knowing:

- who has the right to make use of such secret or hidden knowledge and who does not,
- when it is appropriate to make this knowledge public - to talk about what one knows - and when it is not, and
- how to communicate - the form of indirection - what it is that one knows.

Forms of indirection, by their use, suggest that more is clearly meant than is directly talked about. And, it is often the case that people, in general, prefer to use veiled speech - poetic prose, metaphor, allusion, anecdote - instead of hard words - the raw truth of the matter - in order to preserve more peaceful than contentious social relations. Indeed, as one becomes increasingly familiar with an ethnographic context, it becomes almost self-evident when speaking *the truth* of the matter or *what one really thinks* - that is using hard words rather than veiled speech - might prove too disruptive, too controversial or, on occasion, even dangerous. In the context of Shankill life, indeed, it soon becomes quite obvious when it is appropriate to reveal knowledge directly and when, metaphorically, it is wise to bite one's tongue. The situation one finds in the Shankill - although, clearly, in this particular context the talk is not of illegal or potentially dangerous activities - is quite aptly described by Chris Petit (1996) in the introduction to his fictional account of Northern Irish terrorism:

... Because of the nature of the conflict, much of what has gone on there has necessarily been secret. But clandestine activity is by its very nature clouded with disinformation and lies, and nowhere more than in Northern Ireland. Deniability is an essential part of this world. Even when something is true - and shown to be true - it can and will be effectively denied. The unwary enter this quagmire at their peril. (Petit, 1996: 2)

Working on the principle that much knowledge which is deemed to be concealed or secret - that is knowledge that members do not refer to directly in the context of their public 'for talk sake' accounts - is known by significant numbers of others then, it's significance in the practice of members' lives must lie in the 'form' whereby such knowledge is communicated rather than the 'content' of members' secrets. In other words, what needs to be learned and learned well is how members might use such knowledge. Whether, for instance, they have 'ownership' rights? Is it theirs to make use of? And, then, how should they use it? For, should they use hard words when to do so seriously compromises or risks certain relationships then they might end up simply provoking already contentious situations. As Strathern (1975) notes, an important role of veiled speech in the context of disputes is precisely:

... to express ... suspicions and aggressive intentions while at the same time not revealing these so openly as to provoke violence or to preclude a settlement ... that whereas direct questions, challenges, insults may provoke violence, indirect speech preserves social relationships while still conveying information about the contentious issues. (Strathern, 1975: 76)

Clearly, members use of forms of indirection - of veiled speech or wrapped words - to voice a variety of less obviously contentious knowledge. They may, for instance, always resort to the use of a language of concealment in order to hide aspects of experience which, as in the Shankill, are locally considered shameful. They might also use forms of indirection in order to talk about love or friendship, grief or remorse when, for instance, it is not seen to be manly or womanly to do so directly. And, given their routine use by members of any cultural collectivity, it is the case that forms of indirection begin to dictate certain responses or 'ways of speaking with great caution' (Atkinson, 1984). Hence, when particular types of occasions or events arise members automatically adopt familiar ways of addressing them. So, even though the 'truth' of the matter might be known to everyone, as Weiner (1984) says, members are likely to routinely opt to put aside their hard words in an effort to preserve an appropriate appearance of their self and of certain types/forms of social relationships:

... Even though the truth about something may be known to everyone, saying the truth publicly exposes all the compromises of negotiations in relation to the truth under which individuals operate in their daily lives. ... For this reason, saying 'Hard Words' is perceived to be extremely dangerous and produces immediate and often violent repercussions. (Weiner, 1984: 167)

As Weiner comments, there are many occasions in everyday life when members, in realising the weight or consequence of using hard words, consciously choose to exercise caution about what they say and how it is said. They exercise such caution in order to prevent what would otherwise be quite mundane situations escalating to out-and-out confrontation. For, as he continues:

... The reality of social interaction proceeds through the constant disguising of many truths, but truths are always recognised and remembered. (Weiner, 1984: 169)

So, whether talking of the lived experience of Weiner's Trobrianders or working class Ulster Protestants, it is much the case that vagueness and ambiguity in the form of verbal disguises and dissembling are similarly regarded as useful

discursive tools which, in practice, enable members to publicly deny what it is that they know. Members make use of such tools - a language of concealment - even though it is clear that others probably do know the reality of their situation. And, it might be argued, they do so in the knowledge that using *hard words* strips away the usefulness of ambiguity; a usefulness which Weiner suggests lies in avoiding the directness which:

... pushes the heavy dimension of truth into the public arena. (Weiner, 1984: 170)

Clearly, when referring to Shankill members there are many aspects of their lives which they prefer not to be pushed into the public arena; aspects which suggest personal weakness or shame, aspects which suggest illegal dealings and clandestine activities, and so forth. So, even though on the face of things members give an 'appearance' of much garrulousness which, immediately, suggests to others that much information is being afforded and that there is little, perhaps, which these people do not, or will not, talk about and at considerable length it is, nevertheless, much the case that members' garrulousness acts as a highly effective cover. In other words, members' garrulousness conceals a whole *other* world - of weaknesses, vulnerability, sensitivities, illegality - lurking beneath members' public 'for talk sake' versions of their way of life. Garrulousness, therefore, operates as a highly effective language of concealment or cover. It is a form members adopt in order to articulate certain sorts of experience which, by its very wordiness, conceals members' silences.

In looking to other cultures for suggestions as to what 'form' a language of concealment might take it is interesting, if only in passing, to consider how in a very traditional society like the Kabre, for instance, members have made use of the ambiguity of 'poetic' forms of discourse in the communication of sensitive aspects of local knowledge. As Piot notes, poetic forms are indicative of the way in which Kabre members organise their knowledge about the world for that which is alluded to poetically - members' feelings, emotions, love, is never referred to directly.

Although, perhaps not quite so literary a style, Shankill members, nevertheless, have also a number of interesting forms of discourse - deep talk - whereby they may be seen to communicate sensitive knowledge within the context of everyday conversations. Forms, including members 'joking', their 'crack', their 'wee moans', are as routine and standard components of members' discourse as are poetic forms amongst the Kabre.

What is being suggested, therefore, is that Shankill members allude to an *other* dimension of their lives through the medium of discursive forms such as joking and having their 'wee moan'. They use these forms, quite consistently and purposefully, in order to enlarge upon the 'appearance' of a way of life which they offer within the context of their public 'for talk sake' accounts. Hence, although clearly members may enjoy moaning, they may enjoy joking - in much the same way in which Kabre members enjoy the task of writing poetry - these forms are, at the same time, used for quite a different purpose that being the indirect communication of often, very sensitive, knowledge. This is particularly evident and well documented in what are described in anthropological literature as joking relationships. Members may allude, and indeed do, to all manner of highly contentious and potentially dangerous knowledge through the medium of a joking relationship. Indeed, Molly (1996/7) often enjoyed the telling of jokes she had heard the previous day that frequently contained quite damning references to various local characters. This was, as such, one way in which she might pass on slightly contentious local knowledge which, certainly, was never meant for 'public' discussion for it might be construed as potentially 'dangerous'.

Certainly joking and partaking of 'the crack' take up considerable slack in Shankill members' conversations. Any unsubstantiated local knowledge, gossip, sensitive information, might be presented in such forms which are so routine and taken for granted that, for instance, women en masse - morning cup of tea and

doughnut - will routinely fall into a joking-mode when talking about their menfolk, and men will invariably have a string of jokes to hand when recounting their drinking exploits, their Friday night at the social club, their betting fiascos, their womanising, and so forth. Alongside this more light-hearted form of indirection is the more sobering form that manifests in members' 'wee moans'.

Much because of the high premium placed on certain *qualities of personhood* in this cultural context, it is the case that much of members' 'public' talk is designed to provide a platform for members' articulation of their possession of such qualities. This, for instance, is clearly illustrated in the account of the Shankill Man. Hence, much public talk revolves around situations, circumstances, events and local issues which have much bearing on what members perceive as the hardships of their lives, their troubles and problems. A good deal of this so-called 'public' talk, as such, is often described by outsiders as members' negative predilection toward moaning and grumbling in the course of their everyday lives. Indeed, it might even be said that working class Protestants are somewhat infamous for their ability to 'moan'. However, underlying this rumbling and grumbling there is, perhaps, a little more going on than is immediately evident.

Occasions of 'public' talk provide members with the opportunity of, quite simply, displaying 'who' they are and 'what' they do. And, through the medium of much which is aptly described as members' moaning; about the state of the Union, the behaviour of local politicians, the lack of decent facilities on the Road, local business sharks, black-marketeers, low wages and unemployment, problems with the Housing Executive, they indicate - if only indirectly and through a form of *deep talk* - what prized *qualities of personhood*, of endurance, long-suffering and forbearance, they *must* by implication be seen to possess. As such, and as stated earlier, there is no premium to be gained by members in this public context if they are seen to be seeking sympathy or assistance. Rather, the premium to be gained from such public discourse

is much to do with the indirect communication of knowledge relating to one's circumstances and one's ability to cope in order, primarily, to attract others' recognition and admiration of one's self as a worthy model of Shankill man or woman-hood.

The sheer volume of moaning and grumbling which takes place, rather like the extent of members' garrulousness, of itself suggests that something else is probably going on here. And, indeed, what is striking is that although quite clearly there may be good reason for members to grumble - about the weather, their houses, the price of things, their neighbours, the brue - it is apparent that rarely, if ever, do they use these grumbling occasions to even hint at an inability to cope with situations being described or to ask for help. This is so apparent that it would be accurate to say that; the activity of having a wee moan is a highly effective members' procedure for indirectly expressing *how much* they - their working-class Protestant self - can put up with and cope with in life and, therefore, by implication what prized qualities of personhood - of endurance, forbearance, fortitude, strength, independence, determination - they possess.

So, it is much the case that in knowing what is the reality of their lived experience - the prevalence of much hardship and hurt that, quite fundamentally, describes a way of life which members have no real expectation will substantially or materially improve - members quite expertly bridge the gap between:

- on the one hand, what are commonly recognised *qualities of personhood* and a way of life as it *should* be lived, and
- on the other hand, the experience of a way of life which is permeated through and through with differences and contradictions, with much hardship and grief, and they are seen to achieve this, at least in part, through both joking and moaning. For, what they accomplish through the medium of their 'wee moan', for instance, is the chance to offset that

which they experience as a fundamental contradiction in their lives; the contradiction between a way of life as it *should* or *ought* to be lived and what they know to be the reality of that life as it *is* lived.

Endnote:

Working class Protestants have often been described as a community of moaners and complainers who, although grumbling incessantly about their problems, are seen to do little to improve their circumstances since, it seems, they are both reluctant to admit defeat or ask for help. This immediate and overt dimension of members' lives - quite evident in what is seen as their moaning and complaining - may, however, conceal an *other* dimension underlying members' experience. It is suggested that this other dimension - constituting an 'enlargement of a way of life' - is predicated upon commonly held assumptions as to what describes 'real' character - qualities of personhood - in this context. When we grasp the salience of such qualities in the context of members' lived experience, so the art form of 'moaning', for instance, takes on a new and different perspective.

Shankill members are, by lifestyle alone, seen to be a highly pragmatic and essentially realistic people. They leave little room in their everyday lives - in their 'talk' - for flights of fancy or idealism. And, in the sure knowledge that *life is hard*, so they rank qualities that they might value in their *self* and, therefore, in their way of doing things, in terms of how well - in practice not in theory - they are seen to manage a life which is inherently and unavoidably riddled with hardships and problems.

As such, members do not tend to indulge in wishful thinking about possible but, as history suggests, highly unlikely futures. To speculate is, in Shankill members' terms, to have unrealistic expectations that will, almost undoubtedly, be frustrated. Hence, they value that which is evident and 'measurable' in light of what it is they know, from experience, to be the reality of a way of life; a reality which is predicated

upon a realistic attitude toward coping with what is known and experienced as a *hard* way of life.

Molly's Version: 'And there was me, afraid to say anything in case she'd think I talked!'

YES, YOU HAD TO HIDE EVERYTHING. My mother was a great one like that. My mother just always seemed to be hard to me. Never cried or anything.

Usually men are stronger, but I remember one night Billy L. prayed about his children, says, 'Lord what can I do. I can't put a ball and chain on them. They're my children and I'm trying to do the best. What am I to do. Can't tie them in, have to let them out.' He wasn't really crying, but some of them would really cry.

They all say Ann S. is a long-suffering wee wife for no one else would do what she's doing. Her husband's drunk, maybe go out on a Friday night and not come back till Monday and she doesn't know where he is. And one night she went up to her friend in her cardigan, lives a good bit up the Road, and he left her off and says I'll come back for you at half ten. Came half ten, half eleven and he still wasn't there. Oh she says, 'He's went on home,' and she walked on home in her cardigan. And, when she got down she was standing outside her door on her street until half five or half six in the morning. She's suffered him over the years and he's two other boys, I would never say to her, but I know he has two sons to another woman.

AND THERE WAS ME, AFRAID TO SAY ANYTHING in case she'd think I talked or I was the one that talked! Then I phoned and Harry told me right away. I was really amazed when she came round then. Oh, she was terrible, ghastly looking, so haggard looking.

She says she's worried that he's into drugs. I thought I was the only one knew! You see I wouldn't even have mentioned it to you if you hadn't have known. You know I wouldn't have said because it's not my business you know. Like I wouldn't even have said to Michelle! If Michelle came in, I wouldn't say to her 'How did Jimmy get on?' Like I wouldn't dream of that

sort of ... But I wouldn't, like I don't even know if Michelle knows I know. If I met Michelle now, I wouldn't say anything to her.

I DIDN'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW HE WAS ARGUING WITH ME. I wouldn't let anyone know, you see. Quiet! I wouldn't answer him back, for I was afraid to answer him back, and I used to sit and tremble for fear of him. And when I saw the size of him! A twerp! And I looked at him and I says, 'Was I wise for sitting trembling for fear of that?' I mustn't have been too wise in the head to shake for the fear of him. I remember the yells of him and the curses of him, the swears of him, the thumps of him.

Many's the time I came in from my work on a Saturday night, we worked hard doing waitressing. And you were exhausted when you came in. You were run-round! When I got home I never knew what way he was going to be. Some nights he was sitting drunk, 'Where the 'f' were you? Table-hopper!' Table-hopper he used to call me. 'Crawford and his harem', he used to say. Mr Crawford you called the man. And he would 'f' and blind and maybe wouldn't let you go to bed! He would have caught me and he ripped the blouse in shreds off me! And I used to have to sit on a Monday and sew that blouse all up again to go back to work on Monday night.

Ach, he was never sober! Well I was going into work, he was a baker down stairs and I was a waitress up stairs, and when I was going into work he used to flitter about too after the tea time. You see we made a good wee bit out of the tips and he used to come up. Oh that old slimy, he says, 'Oh Molly there, give me the money for a couple of pints.' And what money I made on tips on the tea-till I had to give it to him.

But he used to carry on and maybe you never got to bed till four in the morning. He used to fight and fight. He could have fought with himself! He used to bang the fist down and you see I'd be quiet. I wouldn't let the neighbours know you were arguing. He would say, 'F' the neighbours! Do you think I care about the 'f'-ing neighbours?'

My arms and my legs was black and blue. Were as sore as anything. I would have been too ashamed to tell the doctor. I was queer while, you see, I wouldn't have admit to anybody, you know? I told Margaret, finally I did tell her, you know, that I was having a time with him. And she says, 'You're mad! Away down and see a solicitor.' I says, 'He'd kill me. I'm telling you.' She

says, 'He'll not kill you. Get the police to protect you.' I says, 'I wouldn't let the police know.'
'I'm telling you', she says, 'it doesn't do to be bird mouthed!'

THEN WHENEVER BILLY WAS LIFTED it nearly killed me, it really did!
When Billy was lifted I couldn't go out then. I wouldn't go out. Billy, he always said I was a moderate, you know!' And I says, 'I don't believe in these paramilitary organisations. I don't think they're right.' He says to me, 'Mother, you're wrong.' He says, 'I don't believe in robberies or murders but I do believe as they're ready to attack us we should be ready for that. He'd even said that on the Monday before this what he was involved in.

I went to work and the girl's mother rang me up and she says, 'Billy's been arrested.' I says, 'Arrested! For drunken driving? Has he been drunk? Was he driving?' She says, 'Oh, no.'" I says, 'What is it?' She says, 'Under some number, like say Rule 45.' I says, 'What's that?' She says, 'Special Powers.' So, I was supposed to work late and I couldn't work content, you know, I couldn't be content. So I asked them could I possibly get home. So, anyway, the next thing, a policeman come up to her house and came into the kitchen. Well I says to the policeman, 'Can you tell me what is this about?' He says, 'It's about a bomb in Killyleagh. And there was somebody killed.' I says, 'I don't believe it. It couldn't be. Linda do you hear that?' She says, 'I know.' She had known but she hadn't told me.

By this time I was up-to-a-hundred. They wouldn't tell us anything. No word of anything. The next thing, about 4 o'clock, G. came home like a ghost. They'd left her off in a police car down the street a bit, 'Oh,' she says, 'It's terrible.' She started crying and she started to laugh. You know, she was like a corpse! And, she said, 'There's a woman who'd been killed in the bomb and they'd had to brush up her body on a shovel. The policeman says, "I had to brush up her body with a brush and a shovel. Put it in bags."'

It was terrible. This was awful. R.'s mother sent to Linda and she says 'We'd better find out something.' So, I went round for she had a phone. We rang down and says, 'Could you tell us what's happening?' And they said, 'David would be released soon and that Billy was being charged.' Our Jim says, 'What with?'. And they says, 'Murder!' Well I don't even remember, but they all said that I yelled, 'Murder! Murder! No!'

But I never talked. I wasn't talking. So, I didn't go into my work. I never went back to the job. I was distracted! I never went back to my work. Never went back to that job. Oh I was bad. Then, I think Linda got the Doctor up and he gave me, you know, drugs, them tablets, you know, valium. I sat with the venetian blinds closed all the time. I was desperate. I wouldn't go out. Then I had to go into the hospital. Psychiatric.

OH SHAME! I WAS SO ASHAMED. Nobody talked. The nurses didn't ask, didn't say anything. Finally I told that Myrtle and Silvia L. , they were in the hospital. They told me what was wrong with them and we talked about that. I wouldn't even go near anyone after it. You know, it was my fault. Well, I thought, well my goodness, are they going to blame me. What are they going to say? 'Oh aye, her son. That's her. That's a crowd to be in with. It must be a queer crowd this!' I felt so ashamed. I still feel ashamed. I still do. Like it done a fair lot of damage. Oh I was so ashamed. I thought it was terrible that somebody belonged to you would go out and do that.

Oh, I believe it was my duty to stick by Billy. I believed that. He was still my son no matter what he'd done. But I didn't approve of what he had done. I did not. I thought it was terrible. Yes, I was so ashamed, so ashamed. I really was. I didn't want the people to see me. I never went back to my work or anything. I couldn't be out where the people will see me. No way. I couldn't have went out and faced all those people. Never faced them again.

I MOVED TO BELFAST SO PEOPLE WOULDN'T KNOW ME. That's why I moved. Linda must have went up to the Crumlin to see Billy, I didn't, and the court case wasn't till June. I didn't go near. I worried myself sick about it. How was he coping? I knew this wasn't his style, you know. And, you see the week the court case was on I came out in a whole rash all over my back. I had to go to the Doctor and he says it was nerves, 'Are you worried about anything?' I says, 'Oh, no!'

Whenever you think of somebody belonging to you doing that, like, it was a terrible thought. Billy never mentioned it. He would never talk about it. Never discussed it with me.

Once he said, 'You do silly things.' If he'd his life to live over again, he was a great fan of the bands and all this, he says, 'Look if I ever get out, if the bands were down to the corner, I wouldn't walk to see them. He was fourteen and a half years in. We didn't even know how long he was going to get.

After he was charged I settled down then. But, then, I was out among people that didn't know me. When I started to go to the wee church, about ten years ago, I says, 'I'll slip into a Belfast church because nobody knows me there.' But I was only in there and I was telling them, you know! Everybody knew!

I wasn't that long in, till it all came out! Margaret McG. said about her husband in Long Kesh and then I says, 'My son's in it.' And here, Billy was in with her husband. Then I says to Mrs McG., she says 'Oh, Kate's son was in.' I says, 'Kate!' She says, 'Oh aye, Kate's son's done life. But he's just got out. He's a Pastor now.' I suppose knowing somebody else in the same boat, so they didn't shrug you to the side or anything.

BUT, YOU SEE, IT'S NOT THE THING TO ADMIT TO. You see I never would admit it. I was always hiding. But, I took a drink whenever I was going out with Albert. Oh yes, the Pastor would say, 'People say, och a wee drink, they tell you, och now go on one drink'll not do you any harm!' He says, 'I can remember my father fighting and carrying on. Some of you women may be come in here on a Sunday morning, none of us know what you've been through on the Saturday night.' He says, 'It's not easy.'

But, you see, I'd be awful irritable. I think sometimes this is what makes me smoke more. Because you know I'd be that edgy, can't seem to sit and relax. But I never smoked a lot till Billy was lifted. Never smoked. And, then, look at me now! I never smoked as heavy as I am now since Billy died. Three times more than I've ever done.

They had me doped to the eyeballs ... gave me ones to boost me to go out to face people. I don't know what they were. One was to go out to face the people, your supposed to not give a hang. I never ever looked at that prescription! I was always afraid of becoming hooked to them, you know? I took them when I was so bad in the house, but me eyes were all puffed. I couldn't see right out of me eyes, you know. You weren't right

Sure, Olive takes a queer lot herself. Diazepan, aye. She gave me a couple one night. She gave me two of them and I had them up there for ages. I think your last one, I swiped it down in dust. I'm always afraid of them you see. I have a fear of those. Oh, I saw her taking them one day, just as she was taking a drink of pop and a tablet. I couldn't believe it! I says, what's that? Oh, she says, 'Valium, I couldn't get through the day without them.'

Even Edith said to me, 'Oh, she doesn't want to know, but when she wants her tablets she knows me!' She says, 'I get that prescription all the time and I never use them, you know, half the time, Olive gets them.' I think she's been taking them for years from when she was in that trouble.

Personal Relationships: 'But they stick together, don't they!'

A Shankill Man: A different breed of people!

I'D A GOOD CHILDHOOD AND I NEVER HAD a cross word with my mother or father in my life. Never a cross word. My mother nursed me through my illnesses when I was a child. I don't know of anyone who had a stronger relationship with their mother than I had with mine. I'm not saying that they're not about there, but I have never seen anybody. There was a special bond there and I just idolised her.

My father was a very clean living man. He didn't smoke, didn't drink. Very seldom used a swear word. Very, very clean living. I'd say they just don't make them like him anymore. Very, very true to my mother. I could never be half the man that he was in a lot of those respects.

My father would have worked every hour he could, just come in and had his food. He went to a soccer match on a Saturday and that was it. No drinking, no smoking, no womanising, nothing like that. There was no socialising for my mum and dad. And, he was always a socialist at heart. He would always have voted Labour when it was thought that if you voted Labour you were a traitor, and 'What about the Border?' and all this carry on.

MY FAMILY TREE HAS DIMINISHED quite dramatically over the years. I mean most of the aunts and uncles on my mother's side and all of my fathers' family are dead, his immediate family, his brothers. I've cousins but more contact with cousins on my mother's side than I would with my father's side. And, oh yes, all in pretty close proximity. I'd see them about the Road and all. But I don't sort of go and visit them in their houses, that type of thing.

There's quite a lot of families still sort of live as close. I see my children nearly on a daily basis. My daughter, my son and myself live within two minutes of each other. Literally speaking

two minutes of walking distance. My daughter was going to live within about seventy or eighty yards from where I live. My son, may be the same. About a hundred yards.

My relationship with my daughter and son are totally different to the relationship that I had with my mother and father. All this, 'OK mate, I'll see you later mate', I would never have used words like that with my father. Yet, my daughter wouldn't smoke in front of me, and I've never sort of taken her to task over it. I mean I've never said, 'Don't you let me catch you smoking' or anything like that, you know. But it's just something she has in-built in her, and she wouldn't swear or anything like that in front of me.

OH, THERE'S QUITE A LOT OF MARRIAGES THAT BREAK UP and there's quite a lot of marriages that just hang together for the sake of ..., you know. It's quite a traumatic experience the break-up of a marriage so there's a lot of people just, I would say, they're living a lie. You know, they're keeping the marriage together just for the sake of keeping the marriage together. There again I don't know that it's just common to here.

My own marriage, though, started to go wrong from the early stages. I didn't really have very much in common with my wife at all, a different type of person from me, more loud, and I realised early on that things weren't going to work out. We had a daughter and a son and that was it.

Yes, my marriage was a disaster. There wasn't really very much love or affection in it. I would like to think that I'm an affectionate person and a loving person. I mean I have quite, and I don't want this to sound wrong, a few female friends and relationships, some of them completely non-sexual.

But, I suffered the marriage until the children reached an age of being able to cope with it. I had a few minor break-ups before that but I couldn't stay away from the kids. Just couldn't do it. When I did make the break the feeling of contentment was indescribable, you know, that I was away from all this constant fighting and arguing. It was unbelievable, unbelievable! And, I would never have lifted my hand to my wife in my life, for all the provocation. Never raised my hand to her in my life.

NOW, I HAVE TWO VERY STRONG on-going relationships. Two different females. And, then there's quite a number would fall in between them all. Some of them are quite long standing, only not on such a regular basis. But, I don't be looking for a quick in-and-out of bed type. I mean that doesn't appeal to me as such. And, most of the females that I know, there'd be a relationship of some level there. You know, it wouldn't be just a question of sex. But, I mean, I quite enjoy the other aspect of it, the getting to know people, being friends with them and having a nice relationship with them. Now I'm able to get out and about more and, you know, I can maybe meet up for an hour or something through the day. It's something that I enjoy doing. I like the sense of independence.

Background: A 'hard' place demands 'hard-nosed' relationships

Although it would be inappropriate to speculate on the nature of personal relationships with family, friends and neighbours of past generations, many Shankill members' stories reflecting on early childhood and memories of their forebears suggest that much which they currently experience as expectations of inter-personal relations is, interestingly, qualitatively similar to that of their predecessors. Of course, there has been a massive cultural shift throughout the western world with respect to gender roles, divorce legislation, social welfare provision and so forth, which has trickled through to the Shankill Road community and left an indelible mark on, for instance, the number of divorce cases heard each year, the frequency of cohabitation, the 'normalisation' of unmarried motherhood, and so forth. Yet, it would be true to say that such factors, even though exaggerating particular trends within the Shankill could not, of themselves, be considered the root cause of what, on close inspection, is a highly volatile context of personal and family relationships; a context which has always been distinctively marked by a strong strain of intergenerational loyalties - of families who 'stick together' - often quite bitterly marred by the frequency of rows, disputes and family feuds.

Shankill Road members, as stated previously, although well capable of spinning a good yarn - of glossing, exaggerating, dissembling and the like - are, nevertheless, quite pragmatic and realistic when it comes to their immediate and personal expectations of what is described, here, as a *hard* way of life and the type of personal relationships upon which such a life is founded. Having, metaphorically, lived this life for generations contemporary members have few illusions as to what this *quality of hardness* running through much of everyday existence translates to in practice - a routinely difficult, laborious, coarse, insensitive, constrained, intractable and obdurate way of life - and which, at the bottom line, describes much which is their common and routine experience.

In appreciating the quality of hardship underlying a way of life it should, perhaps, be stressed that working class Protestants are as likely to joke about or make light of personal difficulties as they are to moan and grumble. Hence, it is not whether they choose to joke on one occasion, or moan on another, which is as important as the fact that whichever response they choose it will, undoubtedly, be predicated upon certain knowledge that quite significant problems and difficulties are always somewhere on the horizon. It is much because of this everyday members' knowledge - their worldview of hardship - that working class Protestants have often been portrayed as a somewhat pessimistic and contentious breed of people who, in being prone to petty confrontations and disagreements amongst themselves - in the context of their inter-personal lives let alone on broader community fronts - are seen as actually inhibiting any progress or substantive change in their lifestyle.

To consider that these people are simply pessimistic by nature and therefore unreasonably confrontational is, however, to assume that they have had substantive options and choices along the way which have not been either utilised appropriately or appreciated; a situation that, if glancing back over their lived history, has quite evidently not been the case. Hence, there is cause to suggest that, in knowing life as

they do from experience, what is observed as a sometimes dour, pessimistic and confrontational response to others - whether in the context of personal or impersonal relations - is a response to the reality of what members are known to 'get' from their lives. And, what they 'get' is known to be rather different - in both quality and kind - to an 'appearance' which they, as mentioned previously, have been somewhat guilty of fostering and which outsiders have generally considered that they, as members of the Protestant ascendancy, surely must be 'getting'.

So, it has been much the case as generations of Shankill families have grown up, grown old, as members have moved on or moved away, that there has been the same common denominator describing a Shankill way of life for those who have survived and still live within this working class enclave; a common denominator best understood in terms of a quality of hardship - seen as manifesting in different forms but no less a degree as generations have come and gone - which has, necessarily, demanded a *hardness* of character and a *hard-nosed* approach to personal relations. Changing social and economic circumstances have inevitably led to many different sorts of problems arising and, along with these, have evolved new styles of coping and managing everyday affairs, of resolving disputes, of maintaining local standards and social control. However, it is the common experience of much hardship - of routine problems and difficulties, of much local conflict and disagreement - seen running through generations of Shankill members' lives which has, in effect, laid the groundwork for the way in which members, quite commonly, approach relationships in general and personal relationships in particular. This is an approach that is, perhaps, best described as seriously well-grounded in what members *know* to be the reality of the life they lead. And, as such, it constitutes an approach to personal relationships which is highly pragmatic and, often, glaringly utilitarian in style.

It might be suggested, at the outset, that such a view of personal relations or, indeed, of relationships in general, makes considerable good commonsense given a

social context predicated on much everyday hardship. Indeed, to have unrealistic – whether idealistic or romantic - personal expectations and to desire more than is, for the most part, clearly tangible would, in members' view, simply compound an already difficult way of life. Hence, there is remarkably little indulgence in what might popularly be described as sentimental or overly romantic 'talk' of love, of marriage, of motherhood, of family life, for members have long since acknowledged that such 'talk' has little relevance in the context of their own experience.

So, instead of romantic or sentimental talk - the more poetic forms, perhaps, rather like the Kabre (Piot, 1993) as mentioned previously - there is much in the way of quite coarse banter, a form of the 'crack', appertaining to members sex-life, current bed partners, kin folk, friends, neighbours, in which anything which is remotely personal or seen to cut 'close to the bone' of real feelings, emotions, hurts, sadness, love, is quite likely to become the object of much ribaldry. Indeed, it might be suggested that Shankill members exhibit some difficulty in talking directly about potentially sentimental emotions, feelings, sentiments even to those who might, otherwise, be presumed closest to them. Of course, on occasion and more often than not out of some desperation, members will share their most personal feelings but, always, there is an element of embarrassment if not 'shame' – of statements predicated by, 'we'll keep this to ourselves', 'keep this in the family', being 'bird-mouthed' - attached to this type of intimate exposure even amongst close kin.

It is suggested, therefore, that in developing a somewhat raw yet, given their experience, realistic appreciation of life Shankill members have responded over successive generations to the whole gamut of personal relationships accordingly. And, close relations with parents, with siblings and grandparents, between sexually active adults, with children, peer group friends, and neighbours, are quite distinctively marked by what members know, and have known for generations, to be a difficult and potentially contentious way of life. Indeed, it might be said that members'

expectations of personal relationships are clearly constructed and tailored-to fit this raw, yet highly realistic, appreciation of what is known to be a *hard* existence. It is in appreciating the ways in which - and the reasons, perhaps, why - members construct their personal relations as they appear to do, that it becomes apparent that there is an informal ranking system in operation whereby members prioritise certain types of relationships, inter or intra-generational, by virtue of what they perceive to be the fundamental *usefulness* - both practical and emotional - of a particular relationship in the context of the everyday. Indeed, members clearly respond to - 'talk' about, express expectations of - significant others as if such a ranking exists.

By way of this brief introduction, therefore, it is suggested that quite routine, yet persistent, everyday hardship shapes the boundaries describing that which members consider to be feasible and realistic in the context of personal relations. Hence, when it comes to practicalities of forming or maintaining close relationships - of living together, of raising children, of providing personal support and loyalty - members put aside that which borders on the fanciful, on idealistic or romantic speculation, and approach such aspects of life - their intimate and emotive relations - in a seemingly pragmatic and utilitarian fashion. Designed with a view, maybe, of minimising what is already described as a *hard* way of life such an approach, paradoxically, is often seen - or so it is suggested - to result in even more rows, fights and disputes, and more rather than less bitter family feuds.

Practicalities come first: 'If that's the way he wants it, let him go and all bad luck go with him!' The way in which Shankill members tend to talk about personal relationships and family life - with few notable exceptions - is described here as exhibiting few emotive sentiments while having a strong pragmatic edge suggestive of the usefulness locally attached to particular types of relationship. One notable exception involves the relationship members often describe between mothers and, in particular, elder offspring. This inter-generational kinship bond, primarily associated with mothers and

older daughters in the literature, is generally considered the traditionally strong working class familial relationship. It is interesting to note that, amongst Shankill members, considerable importance is also attached to the relationship between Shankill mothers and their, often, eldest son. Indeed, such strong bonds are to be found between mothers and elder sons that this relationship is, perhaps, distinctive and characteristic of this community as suggested by the Shankill Man:

- My mother nursed me through my illnesses when I was a child. I don't know of anyone who had a stronger relationship with their mother than I had with mine. I'm not saying that they're not about there, but I have never seen anybody. ... There was a special bond there and I just idolised her.

For the most part, however, close and personal relationships are seldom talked about emotively in the sense of exhibiting particular endearments, tenderness or sensitivity for such 'talk', it is suggested, is perhaps considered far too intimate for the public sector and likely to reveal - that is place directly in the public arena - members' potential vulnerability or weakness. Hence, there is much emphasis, within the context of 'public' talk, in particular, upon what might be interpreted as members' commitment to a relationship, as if, the level of commitment is measured or assessed or graded in terms of how *useful*, in a very practical and immediate sense, it is seen to be given a particular set of circumstances. So, what might generally be described - given this *hard* way of life - as a strongly pragmatic and utilitarian tone underwriting much of members' thinking - their world view - is seen to, similarly, shape what is valued and about which members are prepared to make serious commitments in the context of their personal relationships. As comments of the Shankill Man suggest:

- My own marriage, though, started to go wrong from the early stages. I didn't really have very much in common with my wife at all ... We had a daughter and a son and that was it.

- But, I suffered the marriage until the children reached an age of being able to cope with it.

- When I did make the break the feeling of contentment was indescribable, you know, that I was away from all this constant fighting and arguing.

- Now, I have two very strong on-going relationships. Two different females. And, then there's quite a number would fall in between them all. ... I can maybe meet up for an hour or something through the day. It's something that I enjoy doing. I like the sense of independence.

At first sight, what is described here appears to be no more than a quite calculative and, perhaps, harsh approach to family commitments, to friendship and neighbourly relations. However, it has to be borne in mind that this is a social context predicated upon considerable everyday social and economic deprivation and, over successive generations, there has always been the threat if not the reality of sectarian conflict. Therefore, as mentioned above, it makes good commonsense to approach any sort of relationship members might construct in what seems to be a very 'down to earth' fashion leaving as little as possible to chance. To do otherwise would, indeed, suggest a certain naiveté on members' part as to the reality of life within this difficult and troubled social environment and a lack of nous as to what is required simply to survive continually difficult conditions. So, it might be argued, relationship commitments and priorities have evolved, or simply adapted, over the years to fit a context which is bounded on all fronts by much in the way of routine hardship.

It is much because of quite dire social and economic conditions in the Shankill - a situation always having been compounded by the threat of a certain level of conflict - that much *strain* has inherently been placed upon any sort of personal relationships; between kinfolk, with peers, with neighbours. And, it is much in evidence that relationships of most types are chequered with quite frequent and often bitter rows and disputes. Confrontations between members flare up, it seems, almost out of nowhere and, for the most part, might be seen as largely symptomatic of what individual members appear to be experiencing within the broader social context of their lives; that is, seen as an indirect response to social or economic difficulties, to

stress placed upon individuals or their kin through involvement in illegal activities, to behaviours associated with drinking, or gambling, and so on and so forth.

Indeed, disagreements, rows, fights of one sort or another, it might be conjectured, are so commonplace within this ethnographic context that there is an almost in-built expectation that most, if not all, relationships will, at some time or other, be peppered with quite public confrontations. And, much because of this expectation there is not, perhaps, the same onus placed upon members to resolve difficulties between themselves quietly or peacefully, to compromise or be conciliatory, as one might well expect in other social contexts. In fact, it rarely comes as a great surprise to Shankill members when relationships - particularly those between sexually intimate adults - do exhibit signs of tension and flounder for there is a quite common expectation that personal relationships, in general, are almost bound to be troublesome.

So, it might be said that in approaching relationships as if bound, at some point or other, to be problematic and difficult, members in effect structure within their relations with others an element of discord. By doing so, they indirectly ensure that certain relationships, particularly more intimate types, are almost programmed to fail. As paradoxical as this first seems, there is perhaps some evidence of truth in this suggestion given, for instance, Buckley's interpretation of the so-called siege mentality of Ulster Protestants. It has often been suggested that Ulster Protestants look upon the outside world as inherently threatening and hostile beyond what is, or so it is presumed, considered familiar - the norm - and they structure or organise much of what they do in light of this, seemingly, extreme worldview. This understanding of members' response to impersonal - outsider - relations might be transcribed to that of more personal - insider - relations and, thereby, to the ways in which members seemingly structure and conduct their everyday social lives.

Given this view, it might be considered that, at the level of personal relationships, members operate as if all relations from routine friendships, to family commitments, to the most intimate sexual contacts, are constantly under threat from hostile elements beyond. Hence, they approach such relationships as if there is a constant and very real need to keep testing out, probing, challenging, their boundaries for signs of weakness or infiltration. By virtue of doing so, paradoxically, they are seen to create the problems that they hope to prevent. In other words, when observing social interaction; the ways in which members address one another, their expectations of others, their tolerance or its' lack when things go wrong, and their general consideration for others social and personal 'space', it is somewhat evident that their often challenging and probing approach is as likely to cause difficulties as to solve them.

While acknowledging that personal relations between members of the Shankill take many forms with as numerous individual and idiosyncratic agendas it, nevertheless, is reasonable to suggest that most of members' relations with others within the community are predicated upon a quite pragmatic and unsentimental commitment which, if little else, is seen to keep members feet firmly on what, for the most part, is perceived as a shifting and insecure ground. Knowing life as they clearly do, this is perhaps one way in which members attempt to make less of a 'mess' of things than might otherwise be the case. For, it might be said, there is a general sense in which this way of life – what is known to be the reality of members' experience - in practice, amounts to a 'no win', perhaps, 'siege' situation. Hence, much of what members 'do' in the context of personal relations and the way in which they do it, is designed to cut their losses rather than risk all they have on a desirable but outside chance. Perhaps the best analogy one might use to describe the way in which members 'deal' with personal relations - with family, friends or neighbours - is by way of a certain predilection to gambling. For, how ever much they may be seen to

stake or risk or lay on the table - unlike in the classic prisoner's dilemma or the zero-sum game - there is almost bound to be something held in reserve.

Given this way of life, therefore, predicated on much hardship there are many sound reasons as to why Shankill members approach their everyday lives and relations in such a seemingly pragmatic, calculative and utilitarian way. To construct a lifestyle and operate otherwise would, understandably, be considered foolhardy given the experience of this generation of Shankill members let alone their predecessors. Yet, in saying as much, this is not to deny the existence of a code of *mutuality* and *co-operation* in operation, particularly between older members, which bridges the seemingly huge gap between what has been described as a highly pragmatic approach to others and one which is founded upon more altruistic sentiments.

It is much the case that, whether or not ever having attended church, Shankill members have all, in varying degrees, been raised within a clearly Christian ethos in which emphasis is, categorically, placed upon helping those in need. This is a sentiment that is strongly felt throughout both the Shankill Man's and Molly's accounts. So, although having kin, for instance, living near by in the community does not guarantee help when or in the form members might prefer it is, nevertheless, quite usual that women in particular will feel obliged to assist and support kinfolk and, indeed, neighbours living in close proximity. There is, as such, an unspoken obligation on the part of kin, in particular, to provide help and support if living nearby those in need. And, for the most part, they do so with little expectation that help will, or even should, be received graciously. Indeed, there is a genuine matter-of-fact-ness, a taken-for-granted-ness, about both the giving and the receiving of help which, in many other social contexts, would be considered almost offensive. Older members, quite characteristically, are heard to grumble and complain about the 'way' in which others execute such duties - run their messages, clean their grates, stock up their coal

scuttles - yet, within the same breath, are heard giving more instructions and making even longer lists.

Of course, members' response to others in such situations is primarily a reflection of their general unwillingness to be seen to be asking for help in the first place. Hence, it is somewhat expected that even when members act as if altruistically that such actions will be interpreted and responded to somewhat ungraciously. Nevertheless, this does not inhibit members from offering assistance to those who they consider are in need and, as such, it would be fair to say that, on occasion, Shankill members are seen to exhibit a complex mixture of duty, responsibility, pride and considerable love and care in their dealings and attitudes toward members of their extended families, toward close friends and particular neighbours. However, not all of what they are seen to do is motivated by such positive or selfless feelings for, undoubtedly, much which goes on is clearly quite calculative in orientation such that life in the Shankill today bears much resemblance to that described by Michael Anderson (1971, 1977) in his study of working class family life in 19th century Lancashire:

... some children were interacting with their parents in a manner which can only be described as one of short-run calculative instrumentality ... social relationships of any significance only being maintained by considerable sections of the population in situations where both parties were obtaining some fairly immediate advantages from them, in other words where exchanges were reciprocal and almost immediate. (Anderson, 1977: 66/7)

In taking as his starting point the Exchange Theory of Values, Anderson claims that amongst the working classes of late 19th and early 20th century Lancashire, there is evidence to suggest that members' activities were primarily calculative and instrumental in their motivation with members seeming to maintain relationships only when mutually beneficial. Of course, Anderson's findings might be criticised methodologically on the basis that, in the absence of oral evidence relating to this period, he placed too much reliance upon census data yet, even so, his interpretation provides an interesting comparison to life in the Shankill almost a century later. Given

that much of what might be described as members' motivation for constructing or maintaining relationships is bound to adapt and change as different circumstances present themselves, Roberts (1984) describes urban working class family in Lancashire - from oral recollection of some fifty years later - somewhat differently to that above:

... there is very little evidence in the later period for this 'calculative orientation toward kin', but a great deal of evidence of people helping their relations at considerable cost to themselves in terms of time, energy and money. (Roberts, 1984: 172)

Of course, it would be possible to find evidence to support either view from contemporary Shankill members' stories; that is references which suggest either a highly 'calculative orientation toward kin' or, indeed, that of a more supportive, caring and mutually co-operative orientation. And, in recognising that the whole range of motivations is bound to be present in some form or other, all that is being suggested is that - much for reasons of prevailing hardship and years of potential if not real conflict - members have veered more toward an attitude of pragmatic utilitarianism in an attempt to better manage and cope with what they perceive as a highly unstable and insecure form of social existence. And, evidence supporting such a members' perception is, perhaps, to be found in the high incidence of mental health problems currently effecting members of the Shankill.

In bringing together salient points so far; it seems reasonable to suggest that in the context of contemporary Shankill life personal relations are founded upon very mixed motivations and expectations which span from highly instrumental and calculative orientations to those which are, seemingly, self-less and altruistic. It is evident, for instance, that when particular circumstances arise which clearly demand more in the way of supportive and co-operative relations - for instance, when family members are faced with long spells of imprisonment - that, indeed, Shankill members comfortably take on the mantle of almost self-less support for their kinfolk, as Molly says:

- Families, here though, all stayed together. They seemed to think they (paramilitaries) were heroes. Well, that never was our policy. My brother never said, 'There's a fiver for Billy,' never once. ... And all the time his father sent him, maybe, a fiver at Christmas!

- But there was this other fellow from the Shankill, Colin. The stuff, the parcels he got in! His brothers, his aunts, his uncles, everybody sent him up. And, the Christmas, Linda says ... 'When I saw Colin's ... ! The size of the box going into him, I was so ashamed.'

For the most part, however, in the context of everyday relationships members quite comfortably appear to spin one set of motivations off against the other when asked to explain or justify their pursuance of a particular course of action. Hence, they will talk about the considerable personal cost of maintaining a relationship while, in almost the same breath, talk quite openly about the practical benefits they derive from doing so. Hence, it is never entirely clear whether Shankill members are operating altruistically or whether this is, metaphorically, just another card up their sleeve.

Regardless of specific motivations, nevertheless, it is apposite to say that many relationships which, perhaps, have previously been fraught with rows, disputes, fights, become increasingly supportive and caring when situations of real 'need' are seen to arise. As Anderson also found amongst those of Lancashire:

... a potent force encouraging the population under study to seek to maintain close relationships with kin was the high frequency of critical life situations which they were forced somehow to face. ... This I suggest, meant that they needed help from others because they lacked adequate resources to enable them to meet these problems in any other way. ... It was above all through their relationships with kin that actors were able to maximise their satisfactions in the face of these contingencies. ... (hence) ... many of the Lancashire proletariat consciously confined even their relational bargains with family and kin to those which offered fairly immediate instrumental returns. (Anderson, 1971: 110/11)

Shankill members have an enormous capacity to 'put things behind them' in times of real need and often at considerable personal cost. Hence, one might understand the level of commitment of Shankill members to their imprisoned kinfolk and the way in which families - not entirely common throughout the working class Protestant community as Molly discovered to her cost - 'stick together'. Indeed, it appears that Shankill members, paradoxically, become less calculative and utilitarian in their

motivations the more extreme situations of 'need' are perceived to be. This is in contrast to what is often observed as 'normal' responses to 'normal' circumstances - and it must be remembered that normal here describes a social environment which is known to be *hard* for everyone - for these responses are often seen to be quite harsh, unremitting and calculative.

**Urban family 'connectedness' in the Shankill : 'There's quite a lot of families still
sort of live as close.'**

The degree of 'connectedness' (Bott, 1955, 1971) of working class urban family networks is generally considered directly related to conjugal role segregation in the context of members' everyday family life. From studies as early as that of Elizabeth Bott, 1957, there are descriptions of the connectedness of working class urban families in the north of England which, perhaps surprisingly to those unfamiliar with this ethnographic context, bear much resemblance to contemporary family life in the Shankill. At first sight, one may wonder what relevance any study from the 1950s may have to life in Northern Ireland some forty years later. Suffice it to say, at this juncture, that not only does this particular study by Bott but, also, several which relate to even earlier periods of working class family life in Britain bear a quite staggering resemblance to aspects of contemporary Shankill life not least, it might be noted, because of what is described as a persistent and overbearing Ulster Protestant view of male authority; a view which has both structured and sustained a patriarchally-ordered society at large.

Briefly referring to Bott's study of urban working class families during the 1950s, she found that they were neither completely isolated nor completely encapsulated by organised community groups - the church, social clubs, children's organisations, schools, health centres, and so forth - controlling significant aspects of members' daily activities. Rather, the common feature seen to describe much of working class urban family life, back in the 1950s, was the lack of any particular local grouping which did control or regulate all aspects, formal or informal, of extended

family activities. Hence, although individual members were seen to have significant relationships with those outside of their immediate family circle, in their immediate neighbourhood and the broader community, there was still much in the way of connectedness within extended family networks. In other words, family members still relied heavily upon each other for everyday support, for socialising, for advice and guidance, for counselling in times of bereavement, and so forth.

It was by virtue of maintaining, as Bott describes, highly segregated conjugal roles, that working class urban families retained this high degree of dependency upon one another and consequently a high degree of connectedness within their extended family network. So, although having many different and significant relationships with non-family members - with neighbours, schools, church, social services, social clubs, and so forth - individuals were still seen to retain strong links with family members who provided much in the way of everyday financial assistance, childcare, bereavement services, marriage counselling, and many other quite routine everyday services. Such a description of the continued connectedness of family networks, appropriately describes contemporary family relations and commitments in the Shankill Road community in which, as Bott described in the context of her original study:

... The immediate social environment of an urban family consists of a network rather than an organised group. A network is a social configuration in which some, but not all, of the component external units maintain relationships with one another. The external social units do not make up the larger social whole. They are not surrounded by a common social boundary. (Bott, 1971: 217)

Clearly, much of what constitutes members' activities in the Shankill lie outside of their immediate family circle and, although there is a high degree of relatedness within these broader networks, family members' relations with friends and neighbours are now often quite individual, through social clubs or the church, and quite disparate. Hence, the constraints or boundaries describing behaviour - the informal mechanisms of social control operating within the Shankill - are variously dispersed amongst several distinct local agencies - the schools, religious organisations, health centres,

women's support groups, youth clubs, paramilitary organisations - as well as still very much considered the prerogative of individual families and those living within their immediate neighbourhood.

Although, there is clearly much external pressure exerted - through the auspices of local agencies as those listed above - on family members to 'conform', to maintain what are considered to be locally appropriate standards of behaviour, it is clearly observable that, much because of the high degree of family connectedness still very much in evidence in the Shankill, it is 'the family' - as broadly or narrowly defined as members choose - which, in practice, is still most influential in determining the appropriateness of much of members' behaviour. Indeed, the significance of the family, as a living and vibrant institution in the context of members' everyday lives, cannot be under-estimated. It is still quite apparent, for instance, that particular kin relations and particular family members demand and deserve, and 'get', considerable respect. And, should individuals feel an obligation at any time to 'answer' for their actions - to explain or justify themselves, to seek understanding or forgiveness - then those they feel *duty* bound to approach are, in practice, significant family members rather than any others within the community.

To a degree the salience of the family, as a pivotal and sanctioning institution in the context of everyday social control, is evident in Molly's description of one particular Shankill family network. As she recounts:

- Oh yes, some of them are quite brazen, 'Oh my son did this and my son did fourteen years in the Kesh and all this.' ... But that's what the wee girl S. said when I said I was so ashamed, 'Ashamed! What were you ashamed of?' She says, 'I wasn't ashamed.' Her father and her brother were both in but they were quite proud.

- I remember Helen telling me, she was doing home help and it was G's sister-in-law or sister. Anyway, G's sister come and says, 'Do you know who my brother is? My brother's G.' And, Helen says, 'What difference does that make?' 'Well my brother is G. and you'd better

watch out', sort of style. Threatening her. Like you'd better watch out who my son or my brother is!

Of course, many Shankill families who chose to remain within the district following re-development still continue to live in close proximity and see each other on a regular, daily basis either in their homes or out shopping. As the Shankill Man reiterates:

- There's quite a lot of families still sort of live as close. I see my children nearly on a daily basis. My daughter, my son and myself live within two minutes of each other. Literally speaking two minutes of walking distance.

- My daughter was going to live within about seventy or eighty yards from where I live. My son, may be the same. About a hundred yards.

Yet, even though members may live within 'a stone's throw' they choose quite variously whether or not to maintain relations with all extended kin on a regular basis and, it might be argued, much as Bott suggested, that the degree of connectedness evident within contemporary Shankill families is largely dependent upon the continued and quite apparent everyday segregation of conjugal roles between male and female members. As Bott says:

... Such differences in connectedness are associated with differences in degree of segregation of conjugal roles. The degree of segregation in the role-relationship of husband and wife varies directly with the connectedness of the family's social network. (Bott, 1971: 217)

It is still much in evidence, that Shankill men and women - both the younger and older generations - maintain quite different gender expectations and undertake, for the most part, quite different domestic tasks within family life. We might choose to think of these traditional expectations as being solely the province of middle aged and older members. Yet, it is much the case that recently engaged, newly married, or even unmarried new mothers and their partners, are as likely to practice and maintain quite segregated roles within the confines of their relationship as did their parents.

Indeed, expectations of relations within the home and beyond have, by and large, changed very little during the previous decades of high unemployment and conflict. And, if anything, the situation which members have found themselves within has fostered and nurtured exactly the sort of gender divisions within the family and in male-female relations that feminist writers, for instance, have been at pains to describe as exploitative and potentially abusive within this predominantly male dominated society. As described by the Shankill Man when talking about the role of women at the community level:

... (Women in the organisation (UVF)?) No there's not. (In local politics?) They don't have a big input. I think if they said something that I thought made sense then I'd try to take it on board and would be prepared to run with it. ... It would never ever pertain to the military aspect of the organisation.

... There are people, there, you see ... all this male, macho image and it's more relevant, I would say, in the Loyalist side. But, it's against Loyalist perception if there's a war has to be fought, the Loyalist perception is the men will fight the war. I mean the UVF wouldn't ask 'you' (female) to go out and shoot someone. They would get a guy to do it. ... That's just the Loyalist sort of mind-set. That's a man's job, that's not a woman's job.

The continuation of much gender / conjugal role segregation is, similarly, reflected in male and female members' involvement in largely separate interests and activities outside of the home. Men, for instance, are frequently found, if not in work, at the bookmakers during the day and the drinking clubs in the evening, or at the Orange Hall or Mason's occasionally during the week. Women, on the other hand, once they have established a relationship and with children on the way spend their days, if not working, looking after their own and, perhaps, other family or neighbours' children, socialising with close kin or those they describe as neighbours or friends and, if not members of the 'born again' Christian congregations, are likely to be seen out on Saturday night with their partners or, on occasion, found manning the Lodge kitchens, on a rota basis, providing food for male Lodge members.

Indeed, once having taken on the responsibility of family life then, regardless of members' youthfulness, the pattern seems well and truly established. And, although there are always the few exceptions, as a rule those who have chosen to remain living within the Shankill have tended to maintain - irrespective of formal marital relations - this somewhat archaic mode, given contemporary western expectations, of family life. The only real difference which is detectable today, yet was always somewhat in evidence, is that now women are seen to drink socially far more than they did some twenty years ago. They also engage in more, seemingly, public and less restrained sexual behaviour which, of itself, has given Shankill women a perhaps more coarse and 'rough' reputation over the years than their working class Protestant contemporaries in outlying districts. As Molly joked one day in the context of her talk of friends from the church:

... And, Jeannie used to pray for him, and she would send him cards ... And this Jeannie, I'm very fond of Jeannie, she used to keep Billy J. going! She never goes out with a boy in her life. Billy J. says, 'A forty year old virgin? She's not from the Shankill if she's a virgin at forty!'

There are, from observation, few rather than more couples in the Shankill who, even with complex work commitments - would choose to accommodate much in the way of 'sharedness' in the performance of domestic tasks and activities. And, this relatively high degree of role segregation within family life is sustained and, in a sense, encouraged by relationships members retain with extended kinfolk; with their mothers, their siblings, their grandparents, aunts and uncles. Hence, while there is still evidence, as Edgerton et al notes, of patriarchal structures of authority operating within the broader Protestant community so there is, in effect, bound to be much in the way of segregation of gender roles reflected within the context of domestic relationships and members' everyday social activities.

Conjugal segregation, although clearly a feature of members' working classness, is not solely explicable in terms of Shankill members' social class position. There is a complex set of factors, or forces, operating within the Shankill which have all contributed to the particular way in which Shankill families - as social networks - have tended to maintain what appear to be quite traditional roles and activities within their domestic lives. And, much to do with sheer practicalities - that is surviving within an economically depressed and conflict torn environment - it is evident that members have opted, often out of sheer necessity, to maintain a level of family connectedness founded, it seems, upon clear conjugal segregation whereby, in the absence of other agencies they feel able to call upon, they are able to acquire necessary and immediate support.

Indeed, it is suggested, that for quite pragmatic and calculative reasons - out of sheer need and the practicality of situations - members have been prepared to maintain segregated role relationships within the context of their domestic lives. They have done so since, from experience, they know that this will generate a higher degree of family network connectedness; a connectedness which, in turn, provides the support structure - for childcare, for weekly 'subs', for caring for the sick and aged - which other local agencies are either unable to provide, as and when necessary, or which members, for any number of reasons not least their own safety and security, feel unable to approach.

Clearly, the degree of connectedness of family networks within the Shankill is, to some extent, affected by other factors than members' immediate needs and motivations or their sense of security and safety. For instance, the particular neighbourhood - the road or immediate streets - within which the main body of a family is located will be as influential as, for instance, particular personal relations members have with friends and other members of their community, and beyond. As such, the actual degree of connectedness of family networks in the Shankill, as in

other urban working class communities, is bound to be affected by factors associated with members' social class as well as what are perceived as constraints brought about, specifically, since living in such close proximity to conflict. The net result or combination of such factors has been, in effect, what is a distinctively high degree of family network-connectedness still clearly evident amongst Shankill families in which, irrespective of a daily round of rows and disputes members, nevertheless, are seen to 'stick together'.

What is described as a distinctively high degree of family connectedness is, therefore, largely sustained through members' economic, social, psychological and, not least, security 'need'. The family network is seen to provide, on a regular basis, 'subs' and loans, childcare, support for the elderly, a safe haven / house in times of trouble, comfort, and a social forum within which members might be seen to let their hair down. And, although not all families live within as close proximity - some having moved to the Rathcoole estate or up to Glengormly, for instance, in the 1970s - it is usual for them to maintain contact, by telephone or in person, on a regular and daily basis. Hence, the presiding characteristic - that which members are still seen to prefer - of family life amongst most Shankill residents is of frequent kin contact and the maintenance of a close network of socially and economically supportive domestic relationships. As one Shankill member notes:

... But, surprises you that even people that left the Shankill go back every week. It's got a place in their hearts. They go to their favourite shops they went to years ago. There's Harris' bakery for the baps. They would buy the same things, mirrors and the like. ... The kindness of the people and the friendliness! They're still there, like, in the Shankill. But you go into these estates and it's not the same. (Shankill Resident; Recorded Interview, 1998)

Up to this point, the impression of urban-village family life in the Shankill appears to be quite positive in so far as descriptions - of families which 'stick together', of grandmothers who see still their role as 'providers', of regular and frequent help with childcare and of much financial assistance - suggest supportive, stable and relatively harmonious family networks. Of course, this is a slightly 'rosy'

picture of Shankill family life; a picture which has, in recent work of a number of feminist writers, been seriously challenged not least because of what is now acknowledged to be the high incidence of domestic violence within Northern Irish families.

... it was a totally male dominated society, (women) being told what to do and expected to obey. ... I think the women were very, very strong in Northern Ireland but they never got the credit for being that strong. ... So, I was just introduced into a (married) life where there was a man who was going to tell me how you were supposed to act, or behave, or do, or not ... (and) ... there was quite a lot of violence then started within the marriage. ... I think he had quite a lot of pressure on him at work at that time and that's where the violence was coming from. ... There was nothing to facilitate not working. We had to work for financial reasons, and I didn't have a choice in the matter. (Shankill Resident: Recorded Biography, 1996)

The traditional image of Irish family life - much as described above - is clearly a slightly distorted impression of what is, in practice, known to be a intense context of personal relations riddled with frequent rows and occasional physical fights. As Edgerton comments, even though there has been an emphasis in descriptions of Protestant families on a notion of mutual support - of complementary conjugal roles rather than competing and antagonistic relations between husband and wife - in practice, the role of Protestant women continues to be defined within an exploitative framework of female subordination. This imbalance in power and authority within working class Protestant families is now frequently commented upon by such writers who suggest that:

... Men's greater power within the household and the limits of female solidarity in the wider extended family mean that women have less power than men to instigate renegotiation of the terms of marriage and the nature of family life, and still remain within it. Therein lies the weakness of the 'strong' Northern Irish family for women. (McLaughlin, 1993: 565)

Clearly, there is much evidence to support what such writers as McWilliams, Edgerton et. al. have to say of the position of Protestant women within what is, unquestionably, a patriarchally structured society in which there is still a generalised view appertaining to male authority. Indeed, the subordination of women which they describe - within the family and within broader community and societal structures - is

considered, if anything, to have become more rather than less extreme, with women becoming less rather than more emancipated, directly as a result of the extenuating circumstances of the Troubles. It seems, indeed, that the net result of the on-going conflict in the context of family life has been to increase the need, as indicated previously, for extended family networks to act as practical support agencies which has meant, in practice, that women have been effectively forced to 'toe the line' Edgerton (1986: 562) if not physically then out of sheer practical necessity. So, much in order to 'keep the peace' within the family women, in particular, have been largely prepared to maintain what are seen as traditionally subordinate and segregated roles within the context of domestic life. In other words, they have put broader family interests - of 'sticking together' during times of great difficulty and intense anguish - before what might be considered their individual or personal concerns

**The sacrificial altar of family life: 'Youse'll be better going the one day and getting a divorce ...
he's a road to no town!'**

As is quite typical of traditional working class, urban villages described by Roberts (1984), Bott (1977), Anderson (1971, 77) et al, members of the contemporary Shankill are never particularly clear when it comes to identifying all those who fall within their extended family network; boundaries tend to shift as circumstances change and different events come and go. Hence, there is always some flexibility built into members' family networks and, therefore, who on particular occasions they might turn to for support, and to whom they might be prepared to offer familial assistance.

As Roberts discovered in her study of working class townships of the north of England, decisions about who were significant members of one's family were rarely consciously made and, this statement clearly describes what is currently observable within Shankill family life. However, although the broader boundaries of extended family networks appear to be quite malleable - different kin may or may not be included as and when situations arise - there are, nevertheless, particular relationships

which are clearly seen to be non-negotiable and operate as if 'set in concrete'. Finch (1993), in an update of much earlier research on family and kinship in Britain, notes:

... To understand why parent-child commitments appear strongest 'down' the generations ... need to take account of the social relations of child-rearing prevailing in this society. Parents are allocated responsibilities for young children in a sense which is public as well as private ... We are suggesting that the effects of this may flow into adult life, making the parent-child relationships 'down' the generations the only relationships in which someone can be held morally 'accountable' for how someone else 'turns out' in adult life. (Finch, 1993: 168)

Amongst Shankill members, for instance, certain intergenerational relationships are commonly regarded, as evidenced in their conversations and activities, to take priority and precedence over other, for the most part, intra-generational relations how ever intimate these may be. And, as will be suggested, members direct intergenerational bonds - grandparent / parent / offspring - are often directly prioritised at the expense of other intra-generational conjugal bonds. As such, it is conjugal relations which, in particular, tend to be perceived as the most vulnerable, or weakest, link in the extended family chain. These intimate, intra-generational relationships might, as such, be described as the first to be sacrificed at the altar of Shankill family life.

- Well I didn't divorce mine. But he divorced me. And I never knew nothing till I got my papers. God forgive me, for saying bad words, he'd somebody else. - So, I let him go. If that's the way he wants it, let him go. I'm better off without him ... and all bad luck go with him!

- One wee thing was, he said, that he was to blame. ... He was a barman, like he didn't drink, for he wasn't allowed to drink and he wouldn't beat you.

- We know a girl and her man used to hit her. He always give her black eyes and she used to say he was always threatening. But, that wasn't me for I would have killed mine if he'd have done that. My mother says to me one night, 'Want me to tell you, Mary, never try to take a hand out of a fellow because he would take a bigger hand out of you.'

... But, now I wouldn't take the best man ever walked and that's being honest!

It seems that in many ways old traditions really do die-hard amongst the people of the Shankill who continue to organise their daily family business in much the same way as described, for example, by Willmott and Young (1960) of Bethnal Green in the 1950-60s, by Roberts (1984) with respect to working class family life in

Lancashire during the early 20th century, by Kerr (1958) in reference to Liverpool, and by Firth et al (1970) in their study of south London who, notably, commented on the persistence of working class matriarchies and the importance of working class women in the maintenance of kin relations.

Most, if not all, of these earlier studies of urban working class life emphasise the importance of women, in particular, in the context of extended family networks. They identify women as, indeed, at the heart of the working class kinship system. And, in the context of contemporary family life in the Shankill the central and important role of women is still very much in evidence. In many respects, this role attributed to women within urban village life seems somewhat of a misnomer given the broader context of patriarchal authority within Ulster's Protestant community and comments, as that of McWilliams (1991), to the virtual 'invisibility' of Protestant women. Clearly women have not had - and still for the most part do not have - influential public roles within the Protestant community. However, it is interesting to consider the role of women in the context of influential family networks that span throughout the Shankill. As one Shankill woman comments:

... Shankill women, they have hearts of gold and very family orientated. They try to hold on to family and keep their families together. Try to keep all their family close to them. What has happened (the redevelopment, the Troubles) has broken many women's hearts.

... Aunt Lizzie, she's 90 odd now, we call her the Queen Mother! Then, there's my mother, a tiny, wee woman but very strong hearted. You had to do what she said like. Her word was law. She didn't defer to my step father but always gave him his place when anybody was in. Tea was always on the table but, then, everybody did that and he was there and that was it.

... All the women have always kept their eye on the money. The men just got their spending and, if they got it they were lucky! We weren't really interested in politics, always too busy making ends meet.
(Shankill Resident: Recorded Interview, 1998)

First, it might be noted that women within the Shankill have traditionally been considered the 'lynch pin', as described by one member, of family life. Indeed, grandmothers, in particular, organised their extended family networks as if organising and controlling a small business. Much of family life was traditionally centred on the

maternal grandparents' household and little went on – in the context of everyday life - which was not, in some way or other, rubberstamped or approved by the patriarchy.

As several Shankill women comment:

- Everything centred around your granny's house. That was the lynch pin of the family.

And, families lived two doors away from each other.

- My mummy was on her own in her own house, she went up and down between granny's house and ours ... and she would have looked after my grandmother's house while she was out working in the mill.

- My grandmother was a very, very small person but she could have held the whole nation together. She held the family together and I think we could safely say that my granny's word was law.

Although, to a certain extent, the respect which grandmothers traditionally commanded has been dissipated there is still considerable respect afforded to mature Shankill women within the context of family life. As Molly describes in her account, grandmothers are still considered to be the 'suppliers' or 'providers' and, rarely, will younger members of Shankill families be heard arguing with their maternal grandparents although they might be seen to argue and disagree with their parents. On such occasions it is usual, indeed, for younger members to seek refuge with extended kin and so escape the immediate problems with their parents. So, it might well be suggested that more mature Shankill women, in particular, command considerable personal authority within their family network and, for the most part, consider themselves as anything but invisible in this context.

On an everyday level, therefore, it is Shankill women who are seen to work hard at and maintain relatively strong commitments to their families, to their neighbours, and to their locality. They regularly make use of local facilities, have contact with schools, health centres, social venues and churches, and are largely responsible for maintaining contact with friends, ageing or sick neighbours and, of course, relatives. Certainly, if the women did not put in this effort, then community

life - for all intents and purposes - would grind to a halt. Also, by virtue of daily contact with those they would define as neighbours - at the school gates, collecting messages, meeting on the Road, childminding - it is women who are still largely responsible for establishing and maintaining social standards - of discipline amongst children playing in the streets, of cleanliness, of public displays of drunkenness, the use of 'bad' language, and so on and so forth - within their immediate locality; their neighbourhood. Of course, this is not to say that the women are successful in establishing so-called 'standards' or that, indeed, the standards they set are high by others' standards, but simply that it is mostly women's 'voices' which are heard at this level of everyday social life.

Clearly, although there has been no great move toward the privatisation of family life in the Shankill there is, even so, much observable evidence that the traditional matriarchies - with the pivotal role commanded by the grandmother - are no longer the force which once they clearly were within Shankill family life. Elderly relatives, for instance, are now choosing to live apart from their married offspring in purpose built accommodation close to the Shankill Road. And, young couples or single-mothers, instead of expecting to live with their parents, are setting-up their own households well before they expect to get married. Yet, even though members now establish and, to a certain extent, expect to retain separate dwellings it is not unusual for grandchildren, nieces or nephews to still spend considerable time living with other relatives. One teenage girl, for example, regularly stays with her ageing aunt who lives in sheltered accommodation alongside the Shankill Road. This is seen as a mutually convenient and beneficial arrangement since the girl runs her aunt's messages in return for being closer to her work place and away from parental pressures. Indeed, even though the traditional matriarchies controlling much everyday activity within family networks are no longer the force they were, there still exists a clear expectation that one's children and grandchildren will spend some time with maternal relations. This arrangement is as taken for granted today as thirty years ago

which, perhaps, begins to explain the continued propensity of Shankill women to sustain and nurture intergenerational relationships, particularly between mother and daughter, in quite the way they clearly still do. This expectation that one's children will be taken care of - if not 'shared' in their upbringing - by a whole range of maternal kinfolk is described by Molly:

- Last time I met Jim C. I was out on the Road, and I didn't see him till he came across to me, 'What about you? How are you?' Like I only knew him coming into work the odd time. He just chats away to me, you'd think he knew me all his life.

- When his sister was dying, Martha was only going with Jim C. and his sister had this wee girl, Jean. She was dying and she says to Martha, 'Will you promise me one thing. Will you look after Jean for me if anything happens to me?' And, Martha looked after her, brought her up as her own. And, she was like a wee flower girl at Martha's wedding. Whatever Martha bought her own she bought wee Jean, they all got the same.

- Then she'd the two boys, Jackie and Willie, and then she'd two other wee girls, Evelyn and Gillian. And she reared Jean too.

It might be considered, as such, that even though the opportunity now exists for family members to establish and retain separate dwellings in ways which even a decade ago was unusual, vestiges of much sociability and *connectedness* still clearly exists within and between different extended family networks which, for the most part, is nurtured and kept-alive through the efforts of Shankill women. And, it would be reasonable to say that much of Shankill family life is still lived, using Aries (1973) terminology, in public and women, in particular, are acutely aware of their 'exposure' and often exploit this local 'knowledge'; Molly's reference to 'wee kitchen houses all shined up to the knocker', knick-knacks put on display, and so forth illustrates one aspect of Shankill life still lived, very much, 'in public'. So, what evidence there is of privatisation - given Young and Willmott's (1973) understanding of this term - of Shankill family life is to be found amongst relatively few families of whom, it might be suggested, certain members have - in contrast to most in the community - appeared

to financially prosper during the years of the Troubles through, maybe, blackmarket dealings, protection or other illegal activities which, perhaps, is another story altogether.

If talking of the privatisation of family life there is certainly far more contemporary evidence of certain individuals putting personal interests before that of wider family commitments. However, this still could not be considered the norm and, it might be argued, is probably more to do with factors relating to the conflict than to factors associated with members' social class position. Indeed, as mooted by feminist sociologists in the context of the continuing subordination of Protestant women, it is clear that the on going conflict has been largely responsible for what appears to be the continuation of collective family interests - the 'sticking together' - taking precedence over the assertion of individual, particularly womens', interests. Hence, it is as much - if not more - to do with the conflict, than anything remotely associated with their working class-ness that women, in particular, often will still be seen to prioritise wider family interests at the expense of their own peace of mind and comfort. Indeed, most Shankill women still consider it much of a 'duty' to look to the protection and security, the welfare if imprisoned, the care if psychologically distressed, of extended family members irrespective of what might be perceived as the personal cost to themselves. For, not to do so - in this social context - would be perceived by themselves and others as, quite simply, shameful.

The support system which, by and large, Shankill womenfolk still operate amongst their extended family networks is akin to an informal 'welfare state' which individual family members rely heavily upon and which, on occasion, is simply taken for granted and seriously abused. However, much by way of routine, it is considered common practice to support - financially or otherwise - any family members who are seen to be in genuine need; whose marriages, for instance, are floundering or whose children are in trouble. And, it is interesting that members are sometimes seen to

operate in the context of their personal relationships - rowing and fighting, leaving the home, running up debts – as if such an informal welfare state was, indeed, permanently there to pick up the pieces. In reference to one such incident, when a wife and young daughter had recently taken refuge with their grandmother, Molly indicates how the broader family rallies round with support:

- Now, that fellow came down last night, he says, 'There's a wee letter for you from Sally', that's Olive's aunt, Mary's sister. He says, 'It's for Michelle and Gillian.' Now that must have been money for Michelle and Gillian in an envelope. Isn't that awful good!

Having said as much, however, is to suggest that Shankill people - particularly the women - are, perhaps, exceptionally self-sacrificing and altruistic which is certainly not the immediate impression members' afford. Indeed, there is little sense that they consider what they do for other family members is, in any sense, exploitative or, indeed, is financially or emotionally costly to themselves. Rather, they appear to gain enormous personal satisfaction from being in a position whereby they are able to offer and, clearly, be seen to be giving assistance. And, this is particularly true in the case of older members - that bevy of, by modern standards, still young grandmothers and great-grandmothers - who almost relish the opportunity of taking care of their grandchildren, nieces and nephews, of having them live-in, of buying them extravagant gifts, of taking them on holiday to Bangor or Blackpool, and of providing assistance when members' marriages or partnerships become problematic. One elder son commented more upon the problems that would be encountered if the women-folk were not allowed to be involved in childcare, financial support, marriage counselling and so forth in the context of extended family members lives, rather than the potential burden this might be seen to impose. Hence, what often is described by outsiders as a form of maternal or familial exploitation or 'abuse' of women within the context of traditional working class family life is perceived by Shankill members quite differently.

The expectation, therefore, of helping out when the need is seen to arise is, in practice, so taken for granted on the part of both giver and potential receiver that, it might be argued, to not allow relatives to provide assistance is more questionably against the rules than simply assuming that it will be forthcoming. Young mothers, indeed, still rely so clearly on kin support for childcare while older female kin have such clear and unbridled expectations that they will provide this support that, should either party be seen to renege on this unwritten yet 'set in concrete' arrangement, full blown family feuds would be bound to ensue. As such, a high expectation that relations will do their best to help out and, essentially, 'pick up the pieces' is complemented by an equally high expectation that members will accept help and assistance, if on occasion seemingly ungraciously, when needed. The unwritten *mutuality* of this arrangement is as well established today as, indeed, it appears to have been at the turn of the century. And, it might be suggested, has been maintained and sustained primarily because of the emphasis or priority which members appear to attach to intergenerational rather than intra-generational familial bonds.

It is, therefore, primarily women of the Shankill who continue to play a key role in maintaining the connectedness of extended family networks. This central and pivotal female role has been a feature of Shankill life throughout this century as noted by one male Shankill member in the context of his conversion testimony:

... My mother died when I was young ... and I went to live with my grandmother. My wee granny reared me. And, an old-fashioned granny at that! She was as tough as nails. She was scared of nothing that walked and would have scared half the men in the Shankill. I remember kids used to say if someone hit them - they thought their da's were big fellows - 'I'll go tell my dad on you!' I used to say, 'I'll tell my Granny on you!' She defended me and stood up for me and sheltered me the best way she could. And, whenever people would say anything about you, she would try and defend you. (Shankill Resident: Recorded Testimony, 1997)

Intergenerational bonds between women and immediate offspring or grandchildren are still, perhaps, the strongest of all familial ties. And, quite characteristic within the Shankill is the importance attached to both mother and daughter and mother and, often elder, son relationships. Much as Willmott et al (1973) described of Bethnal Green in the 1950s:

... The mother-daughter bond continued to be very strong kinship tie - not just in Lancashire in the early twentieth century. Young and Willmott, writing of Bethnal Green in the 1950s' commented, 'the local kinship system, as we have said again and again, stresses the tie between mother and daughter. (Willmott & Young, 1960: 178)

Within contemporary Shankill family life an image of strong and dominant older women - mother figures -who maintain close, supportive and affective ties with their off-spring, with both daughters and sons, is aptly described by Molly in the context of her Shankill neighbours and, indeed, in the narrative accounts of the Shankill Man who stressed, throughout his narration, the importance of the relationship he had with his mother:

- You see, there's Olive, now her Ma's so good to them ... the mother's the supplier, the provider ... she provides everything for them. You see the mother lives so frugal and then what money she saves she gives them.

- I still haven't been the same person since my mother died. I was very, very close to my mother. Yes, every single night in life I was in my mothers and when she died something went out of my life. I felt that life would never be the same again.

- Even yet I can hardly speak about it without getting emotional because mother thought so much of me. I stayed up in the hospital with her, I stayed at nights. ... the night she died. It near killed me, the fact that I wasn't with her. But, apart from whether I was there or not, it left a gap in my life that could never be, well, ...

Descriptions such as these provided by Shankill men and women of the late 1990s are highly reminiscent of those used by Roberts to illustrate the salience of the mother-daughter bond in early 20th century Lancashire, by Willmott and Young in descriptions of Bethnal Green family life in the 1950s and, by Bott, Anderson and others mentioned previously.

Of course, descriptions so far have provided a view of relatively harmonious, mutually supportive relations within well-connected family networks. This somewhat idealised image – appearance - of family life has not passed, as suggested earlier, without serious criticism on the part of recent writers on contemporary social life in Northern Ireland. And, indeed, there are frequent references in Molly's account - let alone those of other Shankill residents cited here - of quite fraught and abusive family relationships, of a relatively high incidence of domestic violence, of frequent sexual misdemeanours and affairs, of broken marriages, disloyalty, neglect, and so forth.

In the context of everyday Shankill life, it would be reasonable to suggest, that there are, indeed, as many stories of the various trials and tribulations members undergo in their dealings with relatives as with descriptions of valued and supportive relationships. So, in contrast to a harmonious and mutually supportive picture, there is certainly evidence available which paints a rather more black and unhealthy view of family life in this socially and economically deprived, working class context. As Roberts, herself, acknowledges members tend to have rather selective memories when it comes to recalling incidents of abuse within their families, hence, such events as the domestic abuse of women, or children, or the elderly is 'often pushed into a corner where it is neglected' (Roberts, 1984). From observation, it might be considered that, although more likely today to talk of the domestic abuse of 'others' – a third party – there is much reticence in this ethnographic context, as noted in the previous chapter, when it comes to discussing one's own immediate trials and tribulations. Which, of course, is not to say that 'trials and tribulations' – from economic hardship, to problem children, to domestic violence - are not a somewhat routine feature of members' family lives.

So, as a final note, it should be stressed that although much has been said in this particular section which concerns the relatively strong and central role of women in the context of Shankill family life, as much - if not more - might be said which

concerns the level of domestic abuse and violence which some women have endured for decades. Such issues will be addressed within the following chapter.

Friends and Neighbours: 'Sure, when I was sick, Mary sent my dinner round every Sunday and Emma sent me soup down, you know!'

The boundaries of Shankill members' everyday social life - what they refer to as their neighbourhood - is still often described in terms of their living proximity to the Shankill Road and, more specifically, in terms of the immediate and relatively small number of streets burgeoning off the Shankill Road amongst which they live. Of course, some members have relatives and good friends who have moved quite far away - to Glencairn, Glengormley, to the Rathcoole estate - and since they tend to telephone daily and visit regularly, these more distant members will still be included within their social network. However, on the whole, when talking of friends and neighbours, Shankill residents are making an implicit reference to those who still live within close proximity. And, it is this ingredient of living proximity - a 'stone's throw' - that is still very important in determining those who, for instance, one would define and, therefore, relate to as a neighbour.

... It was always a good closely-knit community and everybody knew everybody else. Everybody knew who was married to who and nearly everybody was related to each other by different marriages and that. You had cousins and aunts who came from the different parts. One came from brown Square, one lived in the next street and one lived up beside you. ... People would have helped out at weddings and wakes. The kindness of the people and the friendliness!

... Betty, she just missed it so she moved back. She's living where we lived when we were young. Happy as Larry there. But you see, she has a whole lot of neighbours around her that came from Argyle street and Conway. And, people still go in and out of their houses like they always done.

... She has plenty of friends to call on without their warden. if she needs a message like, she has plenty of neighbours to go her messages. (Shankill Resident: Recorded Interview, 1998)

The Greater Shankill district, in total, spans a large area and prior to redevelopment of the 1970s several hundred thousand people would have lived within a conglomeration of little urban-village communities radiating off the Shankill Road and up through Woodvale to what is now the new estates of Glencairn and Springmartin. Indeed, to appreciate the size of what would have been the broader

Shankill population one need only think of long streets of kitchen houses incorporating 160, if not many more, family residences. Inter-locking terrace streets, such as this, ran parallel and adjacent to the Shankill Road forming tight-knit enclaves that developed their individual character and reputation. Hence, the descriptor 'Shankill' is a generative term that immediately identifies members as residents of the greater Shankill District. However, it is still more common to hear Shankill people – born and bred - talk of themselves as members of particular enclaves within this larger district; these enclaves describing the boundaries of local neighbourhoods.

Probably as much for reasons of security, it is still the case that those living within the Shankill district will know, by name and/or reputation, exactly who lives within their so-called neighbourhood; that is, the names of families living within 'a stone's throw' of themselves. They might rarely talk to others who live in the same street, let alone those within their broader neighbourhood, but there is little doubt that everybody will be, sooner rather than later, identified by name and socially located. Indeed, Shankill members still often claim to know 'everyone' in their locality – their neighbours - which, of course, probably refers to just a few streets bordering on their own. And, there is some truth in the statement that, in practice, they make it their business to know exactly 'who' a person is by virtue of who they are related to and where they went to school.

So, although for convenience the Shankill, as a whole, is described as an urban village, the sheer size of the community - sprawling as it does between the Falls and Crumlin Roads and north to Woodvale, and beyond - means that in practice it operates as a collection of small enclaves, the Nick, the Hammer, Brown Square as was, then Snugville Street, the Berlin and up to Tennent Street and, then, on up to Woodvale, and so forth, all of which form recognisable neighbourhoods but which do not operate together as anything resembling a structured whole. Indeed, the whole district - since it is too large and unwieldy for members to really know each other -

lacks what might be described as a cohesive or organised social, economic or, indeed, political structure through which communal action might be directed.

It is often suggested, that for reasons of size and geographical spread, members of urban villages - such as the Shankill, or indeed the Falls - are forced to rely primarily, if not solely, on kin for help and support; that rarely are they seen to call upon neighbours who are unconnected to them through birth or marriage. Such a view, however, is not particularly well supported by evidence from the Shankill where neighbours are often seen to offer much in the way of help and assistance. As Molly experienced, for instance, her Shankill neighbours have been a regular source of help and support in the provision of meals, for collection of shopping and prescriptions, in ferrying here back and forth to the hospital, in sitting with her and providing comfort. Indeed, the notion of non-supportive neighbour relations within urban working class communities does not describe contemporary Shankill life and, indeed, has been criticised by Meacham (1977) who suggests that members tend to rely jointly on both family and neighbours:

... the urban working class village shared with rural communities of the past, a foundation built of mutual responsibilities and obligations ... the working class undertook to look after itself, relying when necessary on families and neighbourhoods for physical support and psychological sustenance. (Meacham, 1977:183)

In Meacham's view, problems which do arise within urban village life are as likely to be found and solved communally - that is between and amongst family and neighbours - as they are to be found and solved by individuals. Therefore, one's neighbours, in particular, and one's neighbourhood - those living within a stone's throw - are often seen as crucial organising and supporting factors in members' lives.

It is clear, for instance, throughout Molly's account that she needed to rely heavily on the support of neighbours in the Shankill. Without the daily help and assistance of neighbours she simply could not have survived and, yet, the help that these neighbours - both men and women - provided was not considered by them to be

anything out of the ordinary. Rather, still much in evidence amongst not only the women but also men of the Shankill is a reasonably strong sense of duty toward neighbours. This is often couched, by older members, in terms of a moral obligation toward helping those in need. The help which Molly received - from collecting her pension to paying bills to decorating her new sheltered bungalow - for instance, went on for a considerable time and neighbours, clearly, provided support in the full knowledge that this was a woman who was unlikely to be able to reciprocate in money or in kind. As such, there is still, perhaps, a quite strong sense of so-called 'Christian' duty and responsibility which older Shankill members, in particular, have toward their sick and elderly neighbours.

Although having changed somewhat in style - moving off of the doorsteps and, perhaps, into the small cafes, the meeting halls, the social venues, of the Shankill Road - there is still a regular degree of sociability between neighbours but, not anything so vibrant and routine as would have been the case before redevelopment. Indeed, since men tend to conduct their social lives away from the home, it is mostly women now who, in being more tied to the locality through the demands of childrearing and other family commitments, seek much of their peer support, counselling, comfort, from friendships built up within their immediate neighbourhood. And, neighbourly networks - through complementing family networks - are still very much in evidence providing an informal information, guidance and gossip forum which, is - particularly given factors related to the conflict - influential in delineating boundaries of so-called 'decency' and locally acceptable behaviour within localities.

Again, as stressed in the context of family relations, an impression of entirely supportive neighbourhood networks is somewhat distorted - an ideal - since there is much evidence of as destructive, as constructive, neighbour relationships and of particular members known to have simply abused the system:

... Neighbours provided a mutual support society, but like all societies it had its rules and regulations, and it was expected that all members would obey these rules. The rules were unwritten, but understood by all. Those who broke them were punished by self-appointed judges and juries. (Roberts, 1984:192)

Indeed, as will be discussed within the context of violence in members' lives, for every positive image of 'good' neighbour relations in the Shankill there is a negative image and members are, indeed, quite wary of where and in whom they place their 'neighbourly' trust. So, it has to be said that regardless of quaint images of extended family networks and supportive neighbours, everyday life in the Shankill – much like most other working class urban villages - is not exactly that of cosy gregariousness. There are often fierce quarrels raging within and between families and between particular neighbours. And, since the onset of the Troubles, major feuds have arisen between different families and neighbourhood groups that have persisted for years if not decades.

Of course, many of the quite routine rows and disputes between neighbours have arisen for quite mundane reasons; of infidelity, drunkenness, verbal abuse and various other forms of inconsiderate, everyday behaviour. And, for the most part, these quickly flare up and are as quickly forgotten, or other rows simply brew up to take their place. The longer standing feuds - between different families or neighbours - which are not quite so easily dissipated, however, are often the result of members' engagement in more serious activities; in illegal dealings of one sort or another, in paramilitary activities, in various incidents which have, perhaps, resulted in the injury or imprisonment of other members. Indeed, it is quite apparent within the Shankill community, at large, that much antagonism has been caused by what has been perceived as members' involvement in others 'misfortune'; seen, perhaps, as the cause of their death, their imprisonment, or expulsion from the community. And, memories of such incidents as these have left an indelible mark on the lives of particular families that, although previously close neighbours, have not spoken for years.

As such, it might be considered that, as Roberts also found within the context of working class family life in Salford, there is as much in the way of 'enmity' as of 'friendship' between neighbours and, certainly, such communities are not entirely predicated upon an image of 'cosy gregariousness':

... Some sociologists have been apt to write fondly of the cosy gregariousness of slum-dwellers. This picture has I think been overdrawn, close propinquity together with cultural poverty led as much to enmity as it did to friendship. (Roberts, 1984: 57)

Literature appertaining to urban working class villages often refers to and provides vivid descriptions of unruly communities of people who have been so prone to enmity and disorder that police, for instance, have often simply refused to 'go in'. Of course, such descriptions are generally assumed to relate to communities in northern, industrial British towns during the earlier part of this century. And, interestingly, given members' recollections of life in the Shankill during the earlier part of the twentieth century there is much to suggest that this was, also, a community that was largely self-policing.

Throughout most of this century, indeed, it might be suggested that the Shankill has been a community that, for the most part, has quite routinely policed – or regulated members' activities - itself. And, particularly given events of the previous three decades, the very real and obvious presence of paramilitary groupings within the community has enhanced this image of a locality that is somewhat of a 'law' unto itself which, it might be stressed, it's not to say – by any means – that this is an unruly and 'lawless' place. On a more informal or mundane basis, yet as significant in terms of members' everyday lives, it might also be suggested that the community is seen to be largely 'self-regulating' through the auspices of salient mechanisms of 'information' control, gossip mongering, social exclusion and, on occasion, public ribaldry.

... The police have been accused of abdicating their responsibility ... and I have to say that the police are becoming increasingly unpopular in Protestant districts.

... The police have been accused of disregarding petty crime and there is some evidence to substantiate this claim especially so when it has been contended by responsible citizens that they have been referred to the paramilitaries by the police in

order to get back a TV set or video recorder stolen after their home had been broken and entered.

... Having intimate knowledge of the community, most of you sitting here today know this to be true. (Spence, 1992: 73)

It might be considered that on an everyday basis gossip – the control and dissemination of local knowledge - is still, perhaps, the single most important factor, other than the direct threat of physical punishment or expulsion, in maintaining a semblance of routine social order within the Shankill. For, although standards of etiquette and morality have changed over the years, it is still very important for members to be seen to be behaving according to what previously have been described as locally respected ‘qualities of personhood’ - suggesting strengths rather than weaknesses of character - which, in practice, describe those sorts of activities considered acceptable and those which are potentially ‘shameful’. Members, for instance, may be seen to be engaged in all sorts of immoral or illegal activities - have several women friends, have children out of wed-lock and by several different fathers, deal on the black-market, participate in thefts, have paramilitary connections - all of which, in themselves, will be tolerated. What will not be tolerated, however, is members lack of ability – a ‘weakness’ of character - to manage their affairs, legal or illegal, without, for instance, becoming a burden on others, or being seen ‘asking’ for help, or causing additional problems or hardship for others within the community.

Establishing and maintaining the family’s ‘good’ name - that is not becoming the subject of malicious gossip – so it would appear is still of great importance in the Shankill. However, maintaining one’s ‘good’ name has little to do with being seen to be particularly moral, up-righteous or law-abiding since all Shankill families are known to have several skeletons in the cupboard. Rather, maintaining one’s ‘good’ name - not becoming the object of gossip - has much to do with how a family is seen to cope with commonly experienced problems and difficulties, how supportive they are of each other in times of need, and the help they offer kinfolk and neighbours if and when the need arises. As such, it is when members are seen to put their individual

interests, irrespective of what these may be, before those of family and neighbourhood that much negative gossip and, thereby, potential 'shame' is generated. So, it might be suggested, gossip is, perhaps, still the most influential informal mechanism of social control which, paradoxically, ensures that families and neighbours who may row and fight at the drop of a hat are at least seen, when the occasion demands, to give an appropriate 'appearance' of sticking together.

**Molly's Version: 'But I don't think anybody would look down on you here
in the Shankill if your son was in.'**

BUT, YOU SEE, THEY DO STICK TOGETHER don't they! They're family. I think it's lovely the way they do. You see there's Olive, now her ma's so good to them. Ah, you see, the mother's the supplier, the provider, that's the word I mean. She provides everything for them. You see the mother lives so frugal and then what money she saves she gives them.

Now, that fellow came down last night, he says, there's a wee letter for you from Sarah, that's Olive's aunt, Mary's sister. He says, it's for Michelle and Gillian. Now that must have been money for Michelle and Gillian in an envelope. Isn't that awful good? I thought it was very, very good.

But, there's Olive, she says, 'You know what my mummy is! She doesn't mean any harm, but she will say the wrong things! And, she says, to Michelle and Davy (Olive's daughter and son) the other night, this is a good'un, "The two of youse'll be better going the one day and getting a divorce. Getting rid of them two youse are married to." She says about Michelle, 'God knows half what she's married to!' She says, 'He's a road to no town.'

And Olive says 'If our Michelle ever did take him back and things was going alright then my mummy's going to cast that up.' She says, 'I know what she is. It'll come back over the years and it'll be in her mind.' But very rarely she'd answer her mother back!

I NEVER WENT BACK to my aunts or uncles, I never saw any of them after Billy was lifted. Our Linda went up to the Crumlin to see him. Then she went back and forward

to see him every week in the Kesh. She went that whole time. Every week, never missed. She had the children and she trailed them with her. Not many sisters would have done what she did. Then when he came out he went and stayed in her house. Then he got the house on his own and, whenever he was sick, she came up to the hospital to see him two or three times.

Our David went away after Billy was lifted and didn't really keep in touch. He was up to his neck in the UVF, I knew that. David would have been more rougher and he hides his feelings. He would have been more your 'hardman' type of thing, where Billy was more refined, gentle.

He never phones me. Oh, he's as odd as sin! He wouldn't talk to anybody on the phone. Oh aye, he could come back! But he won't come back. Our David's very odd. He can't show his emotions. He knew Billy was involved and, he knew, I suppose, that I was in the hospital and all then. And, he went away! I suppose he thought 'Well, I'm going to bring her no more worry.'

One cousin who'd been on the police, he came down from Coleraine to see me, the one cousin. He came down right to the hospital. My cousins from Coleraine they came. It was them who told me that the woman wasn't all exploded! That she was just whole. They still come to me and the one in England still writes to me. But they're the only ones. So, there was nobody. Now I stick to the church, they were with me!

I MET KATY AT THE CHURCH HERE, I've known her about 10 years.

She's awful good. No nonsense with Katy. She's just practical, down to earth. I never heard her saying, 'Och her ...' you know, the way you say it about anybody. Sometimes she'll write you a wee card and the things that she writes on it, lovely wee things. Lovely words she uses.

Her daughter, the one Mary who's so bitter, she's a lovely girl. Very nice girl, do anything. Took the brother and his wife and children all over to Disneyland. You know he didn't have much money and she took them away. And very good, you know, to the other sister the one with the wee girl who had to leave so early to go to school. She would, maybe, take her children away. No children of her own. But she's so good to them all.

When you would go down, Mary's always a child in her arms. She was married and divorced. She's awful kind but, oh, she's bitter. You see Katy used to be bitter like that too. She

only discovered on the Tuesday she was pregnant and it was that Friday night that he went out and was shot.

Billy, the son, was very young when his father got shot. And, somebody told me he went out and shot the person who shot his father. Now, Katy never told me that. I don't know who it was Billy shot. He was only 16. But Katy nor I would ever say what did he do or how did he do it. I would never ask.

FAMILIES, HERE, THOUGH ALL STAYED TOGETHER. They seemed to think they (the paramilitaries) were heroes. Well, that never was our policy. My brother never said, 'There's a fiver for Billy.' Never the once. And even David went on to Holland and I used to say, 'Will you send something?' And all the time his father sent him, maybe, a fiver at Christmas!

But there was this other fellow from the Shankill, Colin. The stuff, the parcels he got in! His brothers, his aunts, his uncles, everybody sent him up. And, the Christmas, Linda says, 'we're getting Billy a record and maybe a pair of jeans.' For we hadn't the money to get big presents. And she says, 'When I saw Colin's, the size of the box going into him. I was so ashamed.'

OH YES, SOME OF THEM ARE QUITE BRAZEN, 'Oh, my son did this and my son did fourteen years or thirteen years in the Kesh and all this.' Well I could never see it. But that's what the girl S. said, when I said I was so ashamed, 'Ashamed! What were you ashamed of?' She says, 'I wasn't ashamed.' Her father and her husband were both in but they are quite proud, 'My daddy's G., like, we're famous!'

I told Olive, 'You know that wee girl S., she wasn't a bit ashamed of her father or her brother!' Olive says, 'I'm sure they all thought their father was a hero!' They would have told everybody 'My daddy's G.,' you know, "He was a hero!" She says, 'She wasn't ashamed. Oh no, they wouldn't have been!' But I was ashamed of it. I thought it was terrible that somebody belonged to you would go out and do that.

THEY MAY HAVE STUCK TOGETHER BUT we had nobody! Just Linda, my daughter, and me. I believe it was my duty to stick to Billy. I believed that. He was still my son no matter what he'd done. But I didn't approve of what he had done. I did not. I thought it was terrible. My sister was very uppity after Billy was lifted and all. I says to Linda, 'I'll have to get away.' This was before I went into the hospital. 'Away down and ring your Aunt Peggy and ask her.' I was going anywhere out of the road. She rang and Peggy near ate her!

Well, I was that upset. Peggy never came near me. I have met her now, since that, but it's only this last couple of years. I was so angry at her. Never bothered with her after that.

Then, whenever Billy went into the hospice it was up beside her, and she went round to see him practically every morning. She nearly done her nut, you know, for there was this man came up to Billy who was a tutor in the place. He was bringing Billy up to my house one night passed J. McC's and he says, 'Whenever his wife worked in there ...' and Billy says, 'My aunt worked in there.' 'What's your aunt's name?' He says. 'My aunt, Peggy H.' And, he says, 'She's very friends with my wife. Was her best friend in there!'

He went home and told his wife that Billy was Peggy's nephew. I said, 'Oh, Peggy will have a fit if his wife knows that he was her nephew with him being in the Kesh.' None of them had been letting on to the other their nephew was in! They were best friends in work and both their nephews were in but one didn't let on to the other. Both of the two of them were ashamed! But wasn't that a good'un?

Then, my sister said to me 'Did our Linda want like a paramilitary type funeral?' 'Well I hope not! For, if it is I'll not be there!' I says, 'No, it won't be.' I didn't fancy any of our friends or relations seeing any of that in the papers! But I don't think anybody would look down on you here in the Shankill if your son was in.

The Social Context of Violence: 'I tell them as I see it, not as they would like to hear it!'

**The Shankill Man: 'I would like to think ... you're also saying, 'The UVF's not
bad guys, you know!'**

I COMPLETELY, ABSOLUTELY, ABHOR VIOLENCE of any description let it be Catholic, Protestant or whatever! I always think that there's a better way to do things. As a young man I never fought. I was never physical. I preferred verbal exchanges rather than physical exchanges. I was the guy who would always try and stop the fight, sometimes at great risk to myself too!

All this violence around, it hurts, it hurts. I have found it a huge burden to carry. There are times when I felt like walking away from this. Things have happened here that I could not associate myself with or wouldn't want to associate myself with. And, I have said at times 'I've just about had enough.' But, people have talked to me and said, 'J., don't even think about it, because if you weren't there it'd be ten times worse!'

I've always made it known that I didn't think violence was the answer. Now that's not to say that there weren't times when I didn't react and say, 'The dirty murdering bastards', you know. And while not condoning it or agreeing with it, I could understand it. If you can understand what I'm saying there?

NO KILLING EVER GAVE ME ANY GREAT PLEASURE and within myself I didn't get any satisfaction out of it. I suppose in war I don't think I would ever have walked away from it or become a conscientious objector or whatever, you know. I don't think I would have ever have went to those extremes. I might have sort of fought it reluctantly, sort of deciding, 'Well there's no other way around this, it has to be done.'

I remember one time an army Major, I think, sent for me there in the early hours of the morning. There had been a spate of petrol bomb attacks and he touched on punishment knee-cappings. Them one's were quite common. He said, 'Couldn't youse not do anything to stop this? Could you not just tell them not to do whatever they're doing?' I says, 'Of course I can. But, if they don't listen to you, what do you do then?'

If you're administering punishment in the army, you've a lot of options open to you. You can dock their pay. You can take their leave off them. You can put them in the glass house. But, I says, 'What can an Organisation such as the UVF do if they don't listen to you?'

So, I can understand, sometimes, that people see a need for to administer punishment. But I don't always agree with it. And, I don't always agree with the severity of it. But, as I say, I can understand it. I don't like it. Try to prevent it! But there are occasions when it's difficult not to understand that people feel really angry and feel the need to punish.

A PARAMILITARY, I WOULD SAY, is someone who's fighting for what he believes in and is doing it the best way that he thinks he can. Unfortunately some of them kill people. I'm not saying that all the paramilitaries are like that cos a lot of young people in the paramilitaries get caught up with, err, they see a certain amount of glamour in belonging, 'Oh, I'm a member of the UVF!'

But, it would be the height of folly to admit being a member! If you are a paramilitary now, well, there's no paramilitary organisation today which is not illegal.

There are people in it who would probably have joined it maybe to try and use it. It gives them a , sort of, aura of 'macho' image, you know. There are a lot of people who have joined it for the wrong reasons. Probably more so over the years than initially when most guys joined because they wanted to fight against the provisional IRA.

Over the years, I think, their standards slipped in order to play the numbers game. There's people who were brought in who would never have been contemplated in the early stages. It was much more close knit, more professional outfit then and a lot more difficult to become a member of. But, over the years, the standard has, as I would say, slipped to the detriment of the Organisation.

SOMEBODY ONCE REFERRED TO ME as the 'conscience of the UVF'. But that is me! That's what I want to be. And when I'm talking to people that I need to speak to, I tell them as I see it, not as they would like to hear it.

Over the years my involvement with the community and with the Shankill people has become widely known. I don't want to sound egotistical, but I am held in fairly high regard within the Organisation and with people outside the Organisation.

Even the hardmen of the Organisation have said to me, 'You know Jim, we need you because you're the sort of conscience.' They're aware if something's not right that I'd take them to task over it and, whereas they don't have to answer to me, if something goes wrong they'll say 'What's Jim going to say about this?' As I say, I do think they respect what I have to say and they're prepared to listen.

I'VE DEVELOPED A GREAT COMRADESHIP within the Organisation, I mean they were a terrific source of strength through the bereavement. I certainly find it a great source of strength. But I've never used the Organisation in my life for my own ends. Maybe other people would look at it and say, 'What's J.? He's UVF!' That's not my doing. I don't portray that! I would never try to use it or use the veiled sort of threat that, 'Look if you don't sort of do what I say the Organisation will come down on you!' Never done that in my life. And, people know that I don't do that.

But, having said that, it's hard, it's extremely difficult to divorce the personal life from the Organisation. Rather I sort of would use that, because I would try and improve the public image of the Organisation in that if I do something for you, I would like to think that you're not only giving J. the credit for that, but you're also saying, 'The UVF's not bad guys, you know!'

EVEN WITHIN MY OWN ORGANISATION I'VE SPOKEN OUT against people who had the reputation of 'would take you out as quick as they'd look at you'. Didn't annoy me in the slightest. But, I don't see myself as a hero. I have seen some of the so-called hardmen and I have put my life probably on the line a lot more times than some gunmen or

whatever you want to call them. I have put myself in some very tight situations and I've never even give a thought, never even a thought.

I'm sure the name, Lenny Murphy, would probably mean something to you? It didn't annoy me. I just didn't fear them. And I told them what I thought they needed to hear. I just think that that's the way it should be. We're all men and you should be able to say what you think is wrong or right without being fearful about it. That's what I always do.

Problematic of violence: 'These people, they're good at telling what should be done ... but they want someone else to do it!'

Most references to working class Ulster Protestants, at some point or other, touch upon the issue of rough or violent behaviour, particularly that associated with paramilitary activities, in members' lives. Violence of one dimension or another, indeed, is often considered a pivotal if not defining characteristic of members' way of life - for instance, by Feldman (1991) - which, at least for the current generation, has been predicated on an endless spiral of sectarian conflict, terrorism, fear, grief and intense personal anguish. As Rosemary Harris (1989) notes, however, such violence is at its worst called mindless yet:

... If this were true then, however horrifying, there would be no problem, for we should be dealing with the irrational acts of psychopaths. The term is usually used when an observer concludes that violence stems from individual malice that the majority must condemn. ... but it cannot be dismissed as ... the irrational indulgence of a malicious pleasure. (Harris, 1989: 80)

Those who are often described as violent members of our communities are not, in this view, simply mindless or irrational psychopaths. They are, as Harris says, more often than not quite rational in their intentions and their violence is meant to achieve something that is seen by them, at least, as quite positive in the context of their lives. Also, what cannot be ignored is that these so-called violent people are not beyond the influence - the comments, the gossip, the condemnation - of family members, neighbours and others within their community who will, undoubtedly, have knowledge of their activities. Hence, in Harris' view, those who use violence will do so in ways calculated:

... not to alienate their own people so that they will cease to tolerate such activities. (Harris, 1989: 81)

What is being suggested, here, is that violence - in particular, those forms of violent activity associated with paramilitarism which, clearly, must be viewed as a salient and routine ingredient of Shankill life - may not be properly nor adequately understood as isolated incidents apart from the context within which they occur. Indeed, as interpretivist sociologists in general would argue, there is a need to situate social activities of any sort within the context of members' understandings of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. So, to understand the social phenomenon of violence per se within Shankill members' lives, violent activities - in whatever form these manifest - require situating within the context of members' generalised view of what is and what is not considered the acceptable use of force and punishment. As Harris continues, there is:

... the necessity for the careful, detailed, analysis of the place of the violent within their own groups and the implications of their apparently well-founded belief, that behaviour that seems 'mindlessly violent' to the outside world will be tolerated. (Harris, 1989: 80)

Gaining an understanding or appreciation of how members routinely relate to different forms of violence perpetrated within their community is methodologically tricky. Especially, one might argue, when undertaking research within an ethnographic context such as the Shankill which has experienced so much in the way of conflict there are bound to be, as Sluka (1989, 1990) for instance comments, real difficulties in finding members who are willing to entrust what it is that they genuinely think, feel and do to an outsider. Hence, the distinction previously drawn between Shankill members 'public' and 'private' talk - the importance they attribute to maintaining an appropriate 'appearance' of *self* and their activities - becomes even more acute and potentially confusing in this social context of violence than, perhaps, any other social context - except, maybe, talk of sexuality - we might focus upon. Tracing a route through personal accounts, therefore, describing members'

involvement in, their reaction to, tolerance or condemnation of, violence in general - let alone, particular forms of violent activities, specific violent events or violent individuals - is bound to be somewhat speculative.

So, while appreciating methodological difficulties encountered in studying such phenomena as violence or sexuality - those aspects of life which are as likely to be tucked away in dark corners as talked about and exposed - an understanding might, nevertheless, be gleaned of Shankill members' response to this persistent and consequential aspect of their lives by looking to both other studies of violence in Northern Ireland and to the ways in which violence has been understood by social anthropologists in descriptions of other cultural contexts. Hence, throughout this chapter reference will be made to a number of different ethnographic contexts in which violence has been identified as a salient organising principle in members' routine way of life.

By way of illustration we might, first, refer to the anthropological study of violence in Northern Ireland undertaken by McFarlane (1986) who suggests, much like Harris above, that there is need to understand the way in which violent activities - everyday, domestic and extreme forms - are perceived and understood by those not directly involved in, for example, high-profile forms of violence associated with the paramilitaries. McFarlane is primarily concerned with describing the more general context delineating members' toleration and acceptance of both:

- mundane, everyday forms of 'rough' behaviour, of a 'good diggin', of adolescent high spirits, within which,
- extreme forms of punishment beatings, bombings, shootings and so forth, are situated.

As such, McFarlane's concern is not with the motivations or specific activities of hardmen or the gunmen of Loyalist paramilitarism - illustrated, here, in the account of a Shankill Man - but, rather, with the way in which violent activities associated with

paramilitaries are interpreted in the context of members' lay understandings of the acceptability of certain types of violent and aggressive behaviours. In fact, this study is quite unique in that it does not simply focus, as do many others upon extreme or high profile forms and the motivations of violent perpetrators; the gunmen. Instead, McFarlane attempts to contextualise such violence within the activities of the broader confessional communities whose members, in some fashion, must tolerate and accommodate such behaviour on the part of their fellow men.

In his study of rural Ulster, McFarlane offers a variety of 'folk interpretations' - local level models - which delineate the boundaries of acceptability of different forms of violent activity. In the case of extreme violence in Northern Ireland that frequently has taken the form of terrorist killings, punishment beatings or bombings members tend - so McFarlane suggests - to consistently place the blame for such activities on 'outsiders'. Using Fox's (1977, 1982) terminology, they place blame for what are commonly described as uncivilised or atrocious acts on the 'world out there' which, for all practical purposes, is a distinct and separate entity from *us*; the members. Indeed, there is a persistent reluctance on the part of lay members of a community, so McFarlane has found, to believe - or at least publicly say they believe - that fellowmen - referring, here, to neighbours from which ever side of a divided community - would perpetrate such gross acts of violence within their own locale.

While acknowledging lay members' reluctance to claim extreme or high-profile violent acts as the work of their own, this is not to suggest that members are similarly reluctant to claim, as Buckley would describe, a good deal of 'rough' behaviour perpetrated in their locality as the work of local 'hot heads'. Indeed, this type of aggressive and, often, physically violent behaviour is commonly considered to be both an expected and normal component of everyday life. It is, for the most part, associated with young, primarily male members of the community who rarely engage in anything more than a good diggin'; a fist fight, cuffin', slapping or verbal tirade.

The familiar rhetoric in the context of members' stories of a 'dig on the chin', a good diggin', a cuffin', indeed, indicates the relative acceptability of these overtly masculine forms of aggression which, in being the prerogative of younger members might be understood - given the lack of other identifiable rites of passage - as shows or displays of qualities of adult personhood - of strength, courage, hardness, endurance, determination - so admired by working class Protestants.

There are many routine shows of aggression which working class Protestants are quite happy to acknowledge as part and parcel of their everyday way of life. And, it must be said, there is no particular shame attached to using one's fists in order to consolidate social standing nor in being seen to physically defend oneself should an unwarranted personal assault on one's *self* or credibility take place. Rather, similar to what Fox (1977) found in his study of Tory Island, certain Shankill members are known to relish events of a Friday or Saturday night which frequently result in public confrontations of some form or another. In contrast, however, instances of extreme violence which, by definition, go beyond a good diggin' require, so McFarlane suggests, an additional explanation to what is normally acceptable in the case of rough behaviour; that is an explanation which goes considerably beyond justifications in terms of youthful rebelliousness, the first 'flush of masculinity', being seen to defend one's character, selfhood, personal or familial pride.

Members' explanations of extreme violence, in this view, are seen to fit a category of their own. These acts, as described in the context of members' self-stories, are neither perceived nor understood as simply extreme forms of what is, otherwise, considered culturally acceptable rough behaviour. Rather, when it is clearly not appropriate to attribute particular acts of violence - of punishment beatings, of shootings, of bombings or the like - to outsiders or the impersonal 'world out there' - and when it has to be acknowledged that such activities were perpetrated by members of one's own community then, as McFarlane suggests, it is common for members to

account for such events by introducing additional factors; factors such as drunkenness, substance abuse, drugs or, in the case of paramilitary activities, perhaps, the suggestion that perpetrators are psychologically disturbed.

Hence, one frequently hears in the context of 'public' talk about such high-profile violence as that associated with paramilitary activities, suggestions as to the psychological or mental imbalance of perpetrators - of the gunmen or paramilitaries. And, indeed, this is so characteristic of much 'public' talk that it might now be viewed as an indirect or codified form of parlance whereby members may - within the context of their 'for talk sake' accounts - bridge what they know to be an obvious chasm existing between what is 'normal' within the context of their experience of a way of life and what they know to be acceptable, civilised, humane, in the world-out-there. Members, as such, might be seen to be offering accounts which satisfy what they know of broader public sensibilities regarding how people *ought* to act that, perhaps, conceal or mask what they think, feel and do in practice. As the Shankill Man illustrates in the context of his 'talk' on violence and the paramilitaries, he first adopts a firm and uncompromising stance on the unacceptability of violence - 'completely, absolutely abhor' - which is characteristic of much 'public' talk. Yet, as the conversation progresses - becomes, in a sense less 'public' and more informal and personal - he is seen to shift his ground in so far as indicating that, at least on occasion, even someone as staunchly anti-violence as he presents himself could appreciate the need for physical punishment:

- completely, absolutely, abhor violence of any description ... I think that there's a better way to do things.

- All this violence around, it hurts. I have found it a huge burden to carry.

- So, I can understand sometimes that people see a need to administer punishment ... I don't always agree with the severity of it ... But there are occasions when its difficult not to understand that people feel really angry and feel the need to punish.

Extreme forms of violence which go beyond routine and locally acceptable forms of a good diggin' and which cannot, therefore, be readily attributed to outsiders tend to be explained, in McFarlane's view, in terms of special factors rather than through members introducing notions of sectarian extremism or division or conflict into their accounts. As such, they are seen to wrap up, conceal, or effectively distance themselves from the everyday reality of high profile forms of violence by offering explanations which, in practice, draw attention away from, rather than toward, on-going broader issues of sectarianism or societal conflict. Members also, as McFarlane notes, tailor their versions with respect to their audience:

... In Ballycuan, if it is suggested that one's own side carried out the event, and one is speaking to one of 'them', then one is outraged and volubly so. But, supposing it was one of their side who stood accused, one would not only be outraged, but would go in search of outrage. (McFarlane, 1986: 194)

In this way, members are seen to adapt and modify their 'public' talk - what is contained within the context of their 'for talk sake' accounts - in accordance with whom they think they are addressing and, clearly, what use they consider might be made of what it is they are saying. So, for quite practical reasons, they offer what are known to be adequate 'for talk sake' accounts of events and experience that explicitly serve to:

- identify them, their opinions, their allegiances, with some immediacy to their respective audiences while,
- effectively distancing themselves, given their use of various 'special factor' explanations, from what might be identified as membership of illegal organisations or participation within potentially illegal activities.

Briefly, referring back to Harris' notion that in order to understand the relevance of violence in members' lives we need to delineate the boundaries of what is considered acceptable behaviour, it seems quite essential if wanting to accomplish this task to bear in mind the probable extent to which members' public 'for talk sake' versions of violence differ from what is known to be routine and 'normal', if not always socially so acceptable, within the context of members' lived experience. In

knowing members of this ethnographic context of the Shankill to be acutely, if not painfully, aware of the 'appearance' they hope to afford - of their 'self', their family, their activities - it seems highly probable that when referring to sensitive issues, such as violence, there is bound to be much which they conceal or, perhaps, only reveal indirectly in the context of much of their 'public' talk.

An immediate example to illustrate the delicacy of members' 'talk' about issues such as violence is to be found in Molly's earlier reference to domestic abuse. Here, she made it quite clear that for the most part working class Protestants choose to conceal - to remain 'bird-mouthed' - all manner of violent or abusive activities which they routinely experience in the context of domestic life. And, one might speculate, if this is the case in the context of domestic abuse which, given McFarlane's description, rarely involves incidents of extreme violence, then it would seem highly probable that other even more excessive and, clearly, illegal forms known to be perpetrated by members - if not directly by oneself - will be effectively screened, concealed or, simply, dissembled within the context of most, if not all, 'public' talk. In other words, given a somewhat volatile and conflict strewn context such as the Shankill - a context in which violence is known to be a routine response to certain activities - it is very unlikely that members will choose to talk directly about all manner of violent activities they or others experience or perpetrate for, to do so, would be seen as directly linking them to what are known to be either illegal or, otherwise, potentially shameful preoccupations. As the Shankill Man notes in the presentation of his very public - 'for talk sake' - identity, there are some things which members simply do not admit to:

- I would say a paramilitary would be a member of the UVF or the UDA. But, it would be the height of folly to admit being a member! If you are a paramilitary now, well, there's no paramilitary organisation today which is not illegal.

So, by way of this general introduction to the layers of violence and confrontation routinely evident in Shankill members' lives, a comment might be appropriate as to the difference found - when moving from one cultural context to another - in members' general understanding and perception of the phenomenon of violence itself. Given what seem to be quite different interpretations of this phenomenon, it is suggested that those within different cultural contexts will draw quite distinct and various boundaries between what they consider to be acceptable and unacceptable behaviours; between, for instance, what is viewed as legitimate and illegitimate use of force, between legitimate and illegitimate forms of punishment, the severity of punishment, and so forth. There is, as Heelas (1986) amongst others comments, no definitive set of rules for categorising violent behaviour and no set of rules for determining where, for instance, we draw the line between what is and is not deemed acceptable or legitimate force whether this be physical or psychological. As such, although we might aim to make generalisations, in practice it is only realistic to talk about how members of particular cultural milieu categorise appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. Then, in view of these often idiosyncratic categorisations, we might aim to draw interesting comparisons between what are often quite contradictory models or versions of life as it *should* - or, the moral *ought* to - be lived and life as members know it from experience. For, as Fox comments:

... It is sometimes said that there are communities that are totally non-violent, but this can easily be refuted. Pueblo Indians, Eskimos, Bushmen, have all been cited as non-violent people, and all turn out to have high rates of personal violence. (Fox, 1977: 137)

Situating violence in everyday life: 'While not condoning it I could understand it. If you can understand what I'm saying there!'

Within any cultural community there is likely to a range of opinions as to what constitutes acceptable displays of aggression, of physical force, of punishment and, therefore, what might be described as 'normal' within a particular social context. Delineating local boundaries of acceptability is bound to be problematic and no less so because of the ways in which violent activities appear to be variously perceived

and categorised by those within a community who, in turn, might variously be described as ‘victims’, as witnesses, as bystanders or, indeed, as the perpetrators of violence. Hence, whatever account is given of incidents of domestic violence and abuse by women such as Molly will, undoubtedly, be different in content and tone to that of their assailants. While, similarly, there will be much difference in members’ understanding of, for example, punishment beatings should they be members of organisations authorising such activities, the victim or the victim’s family.

As such, members’ accounts of violence; of particular forms of violence or specific series of events, are often remarkably different depending upon their participatory or non-participatory role in such activities. Much for this reason, it is often impossible to establish what may be described as authentic or definitive versions; that is versions that represent or reflect what members of a cultural collectivity commonly might be said to think about such activities, to feel in response to particular events, or be seen to do in the context of their own activities. And, as Molly says, members make all sorts of seemingly bold and rash statements in the context of their ‘public’ talk as to what they think and feel about situations and what they will do and what others *should* do. However, it is quite evident that the making of such loud and public protestations does not imply that members are then seen to ‘practice what they preach’:

- These people, they’re good at telling what should be done ... ‘Oh, shoot the whole lot of them!’ But they don’t want their wee boys to go out and do it. They don’t want to run the risk of their sons going to prison.

- They’re the first to condemn, ‘Oh her son was in for murder ... ‘They want to keep their own wee ones nice. Let some other fool go out and do it

Members’ public accounts, in this view, might be literally charged with statements of condemnation of violence, of violent activities, of violent men, with assertions as to what is right or wrong, fair or just, and with promises of what they will do given the

opportunity. However, such 'talk' is - for the most part - simply a form of members' 'for talk sake' parlance which, by and large, carries little weight amongst those, like Molly, who recognise them for what they are. Indeed, it might be argued that, members' very public response to sensitive issues such as violence - their 'for talk sake' accounts - are even more cautiously designed to conceal what is known to be members' experience since such experience is, often, glaringly at odds with the 'appearance' of a way of life they might hope to publicly portray.

Much because of both:

- a reluctance on the part of working class Protestants to talk openly about aspects of experience which they consider potentially shameful; an inability to fend for oneself, domestic disharmony and abuse and, also,
- an over-emphasis, as McFarlane suggests, on high profile forms of violence,

it is the case that much in the way of everyday shows of aggression and violence which are quite routine in both Protestant and Catholic Northern Irish communities were, for a considerable time, largely over-looked by social scientists. In practice, indeed, it is exceedingly difficult to begin to gauge the everyday dimension of confrontational, aggressive or violent behaviour in a community such as the Shankill since so much of what members routinely 'do' is, now, equally routinely concealed. So, all that might be speculated, for it is much a matter of speculation, derives from the odd reference members make to aspects of confrontation, argument, dispute - which may or may not result in violent outbursts - in their accounts. These references suggest the possible salience of a confrontational streak running through much of everyday life evident in what members 'do' and 'how they do it'. When looking back through extracts of Shankill members' accounts cited so far, we might immediately note such references as:

- I suffered the marriage until ... When I did make the break the feeling of contentment was indescribable, you know, I was away from all this constant fighting and arguing

- Had confrontations even in work with foremen and rate-fixers. I was forever warring with them. I rebel against authority maybe. I don't like anyone telling me what to do.

- I didn't want anyone to know he was arguing with me ... I used to sit and tremble for fear of him ... my arms and legs was black and blue. Were as sore as anything.

- 'You know what my mummy is! She doesn't mean any harm, but she will say the wrong things!' She says ... 'The two of youse'll be better going the one day and getting a divorce. Getting rid of them two ... ' ... my mummy's going to cast that up! I know what she is. It'll come back over the years ...

- We know a girl and her man used to hit her. He always give her black eyes, and she used to say he was always threatening ...

- They all say Ann S's a long-suffering wee wife for no one else would do what she'd doing ... her husband drunk ... she's suffered him over the years.

- the first two or three years of marriage was OK ... then I realised this man wasn't about to share me with a child let alone the rest of the world. There was quite a lot of violence then started in the marriage ... he couldn't take his aggression out on men so a woman was quite an easy target!

- He used to carry on ... he used to fight and fight ... He could have fought with himself!

Of course, everyday statements such as these – referring to disputes, arguments, fights, domestic violence - could not be said to indicate, in and of themselves, a way of life which is prone to confrontation, to discord and disharmony in relationships, to aggressive and violent rather than peaceful and conciliatory responses to situations. Even so, it must be said, that statements quite similar in content and tone to these are frequent within the context of members' self-stories. They are neither unusual nor considered extreme by other members. Indeed, in joint conversations various parties will frequently butt-in with similar statements, similar recollections from their own or others' experience. Hence, although such references as above suggest little, if anything, in themselves they, nevertheless, as recent primarily feminist sociologists - Edgerton (1986), McLaughlin (1993) et al - consider,

hint at a somewhat different image of family life to that we have become accustomed. As McFarlane says, it is quite probable that much everyday violence has been largely ignored or over-looked by social scientists during the years of conflict such that, much in the way of everyday aggressive and violent behaviour has, as Fox describes, festered away largely unnoticed and remained largely unrecorded.

The existence of a largely hidden yet, seemingly, routine and everyday dimension of confrontational, aggressive and, on occasion, outright physically violent behaviour in, for instance, members' domestic lives makes it very difficult in practice to accomplish what Harris and McFarlane suggest is required in order to gauge the import of extreme forms of violence in members' routine lives. When much of what members think, feel and do is, quite purposefully, concealed it is difficult to gain what approximates to a valid insight into the ways in which members situate aggressive and violent behaviours within the context of their everyday experience. And, in all likelihood, the boundaries of acceptability shift and change dramatically as events unravel and members are variously drawn into new situations as, perhaps, victims, bystanders or, indeed, as assailants themselves. In saying as much, however, is not to suggest that there is any less need to attempt to gauge the dimension of shows of aggression and violence in the context of Shankill members' lives, whether or not they choose to conceal such activities within their public 'for talk sake' accounts for, as Chagnon (1988, 92) comments:

... Violence is a potent force in human society and may be the principal driving force behind the evolution of culture. For two reasons, anthropologists find it difficult to explain many aspects of human violence. First, although ethnographic reports are numerous, data on how much violence occurs and the variables that relate to it are available from only a few primitive societies.

Second, many anthropologists tend to treat warfare as a phenomenon that occurs independently of other forms of violence in the same group ... such views fail to take into account the developmental sequences of conflicts and the multiplicity of causes, especially sexual jealousy ... and revenge killings, in each step of the conflict escalation. (Chagnon, 1988: 985)

As found in studies of other cultures, it is often the case that all manner of aggressive and potentially violent behaviours, from domestic disputes to displays of

masculine aggression to, as in the Shankill, extreme forms of paramilitary style activities - punishment beatings and the like - are variously channelled, repressed, suppressed, if not pushed into corners where they remain largely ignored or unnoticed by members not wanting to see or acknowledge their existence, or by outsiders who are not looking for such evidence. Hence, the explanation given for the under-reporting of much domestic violence and abuse in Northern Ireland. It would be fair to suggest, therefore, that much routine everyday violence - of the sort Chagnon is talking about - is in fact likely to be so taken for granted a way of accomplishing everyday activities that it is largely uncommented upon by members and, therefore, its' significance as an organising principle in the context of members' cultural lives tends to be ignored by outsiders.

Of course, even where aggression and violence is undoubtedly seen to be a routine and expected response within the context of members' activities, there is much which might be included within this broad dimension which particular members quite consciously choose not to be associated or identified with; they might, for quite idiosyncratic reasons, both publicly and privately, distance themselves from certain sorts of confrontational, aggressive or violent activities and choose not to be associated with anything or anyone involved in such behaviours. As illustrated by the Shankill Man:

- There are times when I felt like walking away from this. Things have happened here that I could not associate myself with or wouldn't want to associate myself with. And, I have said at times, 'I've just about had enough.' But, people have talked to me and said; 'Jim, don't even think about it! Because if you weren't there it'd be ten times worse!'

However, as Fox (1982) says, this is perhaps a quite unusual response since in the same way that we might consider 'sex is pleasurable' so, similarly, it is considered that 'violence may be pleasurable' and, given the right context, it is known to generate tremendous excitement. In his view, although members of a particular cultural

collectivity might despair at the violence taking place within their midst it is, nevertheless, the case - as many psychologists have agreed and as commonsense indicates - that they might actually be taught and, in turn, learn to enjoy this potent aspect of human behaviour. Indeed, as Fox suggests:

... The rules of fighting are as natural as the fighting itself. Given symbolic capacity, men can play elaborate games with these rules (as they do with language), in a way that a non-symbolising animal could not. But the fact that he is moved as strongly to regulate as he is to fight is another intriguing source of hope. Because man is as turned on by rules and regulations, even when he opposes them, as he is by sex, food and the joy of combat. Left to his own devices, in other words, man would regulate his sex and violence with as much relish as he copulates and fights. (Fox, 1982: 23)

Displays of Strength and Aggression: 'I've spoken out against people who had the reputation of 'would take you out as quick as look at you!'

Much in keeping with the earlier discussion on locally favoured 'qualities of personhood' in the Shankill - of pride, courage, forbearance, long-suffering, endurance, determination, of personal strength triumphing over weakness - it is useful to locate these ideas within the context of other anthropological descriptions of shows or displays of strength and aggression that, interestingly, bear remarkable resemblance to the way in which Shankill people respond to life's trials and tribulations. It is generally considered in anthropological literature that, in the same way members readily learn the rules of language they, also, learn and follow very distinctive patterns or displays of strength and aggression within different cultural contexts. Writers such as Heald (1989), Chagnon (1992), Piot (1993), Haas (1990) et al describe members of a broad range of communities as exhibiting culturally conditioned shows of ferocity, of aggression, of spirit and anger which may, on occasion, result in physically violent outbursts.

Displays of aggressive emotions, which may or may not lead on to physical assaults, are rarely interpreted by anthropologists as random or unexpected incidents which, if looking at each in isolation, might be supposed. Rather, such incidents tend to be located within a broader social context in which members are seen to adopt

culturally prescribed procedures for what appear to be routine, regular, and highly predictable displays of anger, ferocity, strength and aggression. As such, what at first appear to be an isolated, quite randomly structured aggressive or violent confrontation is seen - if the incident is located within the broader cultural context - to exhibit recognisable patterns which, in Fox's (1977, 82) terminology, constitutes an inherent, yet clearly viable, set of rules governing the locally acceptable expression of aggressive emotions and violence.

In the same way, therefore, that language is described as rule governed, so displays of aggression and fighting are similarly governed by an inherent set of rules. And, given that while speaking we are mostly oblivious of the rules governing our use of language, it is the case that members are largely unaware of the implicit rules governing displays of aggression and fighting. Even so, these rules may be seen to exist - they may be observed in the context of members' practice - and, in the main, members tend to conform to them. Indeed, as the anthropological literature suggests, it is very rare to find fighting which is entirely random, disorderly or unstructured. Rather, the rules governing displays of violence are seen to be as strictly, if subtly, enforced as are those more explicit rules pertaining to incest, kinship, marriage and so forth.

It is suggested, therefore, that displays of violence whether these be forms of domestic violence, as described and experienced by Molly, violence against oneself, forms of self-mutilation or attempted suicides, or other more extreme - high profile - forms of violence against others, as referred to by the Shankill Man, which often take the form of punishment beatings, of shootings, of bombings, are all governed by inherent rules which determine the ways in which members routinely express such emotions as aggression, ferocity, pride, anger, and so forth. Of particular interest, given this ethnographic context, is that such displays of aggression and violence are not seen to lead on to an uncontrollable escalation of violence; that is to a situation of

chaos or utter confusion. Instead, as the literature - Fox, Chagnon, Haas et al - and our common experience of Northern Ireland suggests:

... there are societies in which the whole way of life is geared to fighting and violence of one sort or another, and yet there is order. They don't wipe each other out; there isn't a terrible breakdown of the social system and there aren't any of the terrible consequences one might expect entertaining a Hobbesian view of it all. (Fox, 1982: 146)

Haas et al (1990) arrived at similar conclusions to those suggested in the above quotation on the basis of an extensive ethnographic study of traditional societies noted for the excessively high incidence of various forms of violent activity. They suggest that even though such societies exhibit high rates of violence - much inter-personal and communal conflict - there appears to be a fail-safe mechanism operating according to an implicit set of rules which controls the escalation of violence so that it is halted somewhat short of genocide.

Quite fundamental to most of the societies studied by Haas was the sheer prevalence of much personal violence or outright warfare and, in some instances, both forms of confrontation existed side by side. Indeed, violence - shows of aggression, physical force, fighting, from the domestic to societal level - were found to be a common denominator of most, if not all, traditional and contemporary societies. It was so common to all societies studied that they considered the social phenomenon of violence might best be depicted as an independent, rather than a dependent, variable in the organisation or structuring of social life. In other words, aggressive outbursts that may on occasion develop into overt violence do not constitute a form of social behaviour simply erupting now and again due to particular economic, social or political configurations. And, should we persist in adhering to a view of social relations as inherently peaceful or harmonious, as non-contentious or non-violent then, in their view, we are constructing fictitious or idealistic models that, simply, do not fit the data.

In light of comments above, an image might be formulated of the centrality of displays of strength and aggression - whether verbal or physical - in everyday Shankill life. For, as has been suggested, both Shankill men and women predicate much of their construction of 'self', of status and local social standing upon quite public shows of 'strength' of character, of *self* or person-hood and these shows are designed, quite categorically, to exhibit individual qualities of courage, hardness, determination, persistence, will power, independence, individuality of spirit, and so forth. As the Shankill Man illustrates; first, in the context of his working life:

- Had confrontations even in work with foremen and rate-fixers. I was forever warring with them. I rebel against authority maybe. I don't like anyone telling me what to do. I don't know if it's inherent with most Shankill Road people.

And, second, in the context of his paramilitary involvement:

- When I'm talking to people that I need to speak to, I tell them as I see it, not as they would like to hear it! ... Even within my own organisation, I've spoken out against people who had the reputation of 'would take you out as quick as they'd look at you.' Didn't annoy me in the slightest. ... I've put myself in some very tight situations and I've never even given a thought. ... We're all men and you should be able to say what you think ... without being fearful about it. That's what I always do.

From even these brief extracts, there is a sense gleaned of the importance which this man places on 'speaking his mind' and when the occasion requires, as referred to previously, on using *hard words* rather than veiled speech, even knowing these to be confrontational. But, for the Shankill Man, as his account exhibits throughout, it is important that he is both:

- seen to speak his peace; that is to overtly challenge those he disagrees with rather than doing so covertly or 'behind their backs' and,
- that he is not seen to be fearful of the consequences of doing so.

In communities like the Shankill in which so much of the daily routine is chequered with mostly petty, yet persistent, disputes - domestic rows and arguments,

shows of male bravado, of the 'macho' quality described by the Shankill Man, of youthful rebellion, let alone of more serious punishments metered out by the paramilitary organisations - it is, perhaps, more pertinent to question why, for instance, these simmering 'pots' do not more frequently boil over into what might be described as uncontrolled displays of aggression and violence between members than are, in fact, evident. For, although there are some long-standing feuds between different family-based factions or paramilitary units these have never erupted into total, outright hostility in which revenge has been sort at any cost. Indeed, in the case of two such warring families, until very recently and due to bereavement, it was the case that members of the two families lived as close as next-door neighbours. Yet, revenge for very serious misdemeanours that had been the initial cause of the feud was never sort against what might be described as convenient but 'soft' targets. Although such a view of members' magnanimity might be somewhat strained in the present climate of punishment beatings and expulsions, members still recall with a certain fondness the halcyon days before the Troubles when disagreements were less dramatic and immediately consequential:

... Well everybody sort of way thought their's was the best place (the Nick, the Hammer, etc.) but at the end don't forget everybody had aunts and uncles and cousins and all living in them different places. There was no real animosity. Some pretty hard men about. They'd have fisticuffs, but they were friends the next day. There was never no real badness or anything. Men would have took off their coats and fought and the next day went up to the Park for a walk to get their heads together. There was no such thing as bad people. Well, maybe there was and it was all hidden. But I never saw it. That's the way I remember it. (Shankill Resident: Recorded Interview, 1998)

Considering the Shankill Road community, for the moment, as a self-contained community without the range of other problems on its doorstep, it is perhaps relevant to question why, in fact, violence - verbal, psychological, physical - routinely perpetrated by members upon each other has never escalated out of control; it has always, in a very practical sense, been contained and members - a notable coterie of infamous characters, even so - have relatively seldom radically over stepped the mark. Indeed, the most notable incidents of violence within the community escalating into the danger zones have been connected to what might be described as

'rogue' paramilitary units – like the Shankill Butchers - whose members, on occasion, have become a law unto themselves. As Haas et al note, however, that violence does not escalate to levels of outright conflict within a community does not preclude the existence of other routine forms of personal violence; of bullying, beatings, domestic abuse, neighbour confrontations. And these, although generally controlled and localised are, nevertheless, common features of everyday Shankill life. In fact, as already noted, the round of everyday life in the Shankill is much marked by what appears on the surface, at least, to be quite purposefully structured 'head on' confrontations which often take the form of verbal tirades. As the account of the Shankill Man illustrates, members commonly make use of *hard words* in their dealings with others; **'I told them what I thought they needed to hear!'**

Shows of aggression, particularly aggressive verbal exchanges, and certain forms of violence - a good diggin' or slapping - might be said to be commonplace in Shankill Road life. However, for the most part, these confrontations are contained and, as Fox would have it, local rules of the 'fighting game' contain members' outbursts so that on the whole aggressive and violent behaviour of one form is, in practice, not allowed to escalate into violence of another dimension. Hence, in the context of family life, arguments and disputes between married couples appear as if orchestrated or played-out in such a way that conflict at this level is not allowed to escalate into conflict on a broader intergeneration platform. In other words, well before confrontations at the former level are allowed to seriously disrupt significant intergeneration relations the intra-generational conjugal bond is sacrificed. As described by Girard (1972) below, in theory this is accomplished through the instigation of mechanisms - rules and procedures - constituting a largely ritualised dynamic which diffuses the escalation of violence by, in effect, controlling the element of revenge.

As such, although it is suggested that there is much in the way of everyday confrontation, shows of aggression, inter-personal and domestic violence in Shankill life there must, necessarily, be an implicit understanding - a dynamic or logic - whereby members moderate any native thirst to continually seek revenge for wrongdoings. In reference to traditional societies, Girard talks of the role of sacrifice in controlling such spirals of revenge. This highly ritualised procedure is considered to be the traditional mechanism or dynamic which, in practice, limits the escalation or development of inter-personal conflict into larger scale feuds, even warfare. For Girard, then, the mechanism which members most regularly employ to inhibit the sort of conflict escalation Chagnon, and others, fear is an ability to deflect the 'spirit of revenge' from identifiable persons to some sacrificial, sacred or ritualised event.

It is the spirit of revenge upon which, in Girard's view, violence is seen to hang since it is the desire for revenge that prolongs and escalates the incidence of violence in society. Hence, if it is considered that violence may be pleasurable, as postulated earlier, and that we may learn to indulge this pleasure then, similarly, we might consider revenge to be equally 'sweet' as, perhaps, we learn to either indulge or control this emotion. Girard, in elaborating upon this theme of revenge, suggests that:

... Vengeance is an interminable, infinitely repetitive process. Every time it turns up it threatens to involve the whole social body. ... multiplication of reprisals instantaneously puts every existence of society in jeopardy, and that is why it is universally proscribed. (Girard, 1972: 14)

Clearly Girard's work relates directly to traditional societies in which there exists a clear and strong relationship between violence and the sacred; a relationship that, although of some importance, is not further explored in this context. However, even though putting to one side questions concerning the dimension of the sacred, much which Girard talks about in this context is highly relevant to any study of violence in which the threat of revenge is an abiding factor.

When violence, as writers - Fox, Chagnon, Girard, et al - suggest, is understood as 'as basic a human drive as sex' then in much the same way that the

expression of this fundamental physical and emotional drive will be largely culturally determined so, also, members of different cultural collectivities might be seen to devise varied and various *face saving* mechanisms to control what might otherwise escalate into endless cycles of revenge leading ultimately to genocide. In modern society the judicial system in part fulfils this important role in serving to deflect the 'menace of vengeance' by, as Girard says, depersonalising it; that is taking it out of the hands of individuals and putting it into the hands of the state. And, this very procedure illustrates a basic appreciation that:

... our judicial system serves to deflect the menace of vengeance ... limits to a single act of reprisal ... therefore public vengeance is the exclusive property of well-policed societies and called the judicial system. (Girard, 1972: 15)

So, if starting from the premise that violence is endemic to human society and that shows of aggression and violence are, for instance, quite 'natural' – the activities of 'normal' people - in the context of many other societies let alone the lives of Shankill Road members, then the analytic emphasis shifts from:

- questions of 'why' members engage in seemingly routine acts of aggression and violence; as if violence is a dependent variable, to
- questions which focus on the ways in which members actually structure cultural mechanisms whereby their spirit of revenge, which if left unchecked would lead ultimately to their total demise, is appeased.

Violence, in itself, may well be described as infectious and, on occasion, become a source of great excitement which, as Fox amongst others suggest, members may learn to enjoy and indulge. Even so, it is evident that in all cultural systems described by Haas et al there are break points; that is points at which violence, or the repercussions of spirals of vengeance, must be dissipated or members risk their own demise. As such, although simply speculating, it seems plausible that given the existence of a system of implicit rules, as Fox describes, governing displays of aggression and violence - the 'fighting game' - wrapped within this code will be a dynamic governing the escalation and control of revenge.

'Hard words' are dangerous words: 'I tell them as I see it, not as they would like to hear it!'

In attempting to describe the dimensions - boundaries - of what is locally considered the acceptable or 'normal' use of force and punishment in Shankill members' lives, that is the context of routine or everyday violence within which we might begin to locate more extreme forms of violence, it is appropriate to consider the salience of, seemingly, common place and frequent personal confrontations, arguments and disputes in the context of members' everyday interactions. For, in this particular ethnographic context, it might be considered that confrontations, arguments and disputes leading, on occasion, to overtly violent activities, might well be described as:

... the principal driving force behind the evolution of culture. (Chagnon, 1988: 985)

As considered so far, Shankill Road people - both men and women - adopt a style of 'public' talk which, in itself, might be described as quite direct and confrontational; that is they have a preference to use what has earlier been referred to as *hard words* or, in the Shankill Man's terms:

- when I'm talking to people I need to speak to ... I tell them as I see it.

As Weiner (1984) says, there are potential dangers associated with being so forthright in public speech since speaking the 'truth' - the 'as I see it' - of something or using hard words leaves little space for members to compromise or modify their position:

... 'Hard Words' once spoken cannot be recalled; apologies do not carry any power to mute their effects. From this perspective, 'Hard Words' are weighty, carrying the ability to penetrate the personal space of others. (Weiner, 1984: 167)

It is in knowing the potential danger of using hard words that other styles of 'veiled speech' (Strathern, 1975) are often - in other cultural contexts - preferred since their use allows members, to some extent, to disguise the true meaning of events or situations in order to avoid confrontation and open conflict on a day-to-day basis. In certain societies, indeed, such practices have taken on a special value and offer, as Atkinson (1984) describes, a 'way of speaking with great caution' and, therefore, of

interacting cautiously and non-contentiously with neighbours. As Strathern (1975) notes, an important role of 'veiled speech' in preference to the use of 'hard words' is:

... to express suspicions and aggressive intentions while at the same time not revealing these so openly as to provoke violence or to preclude a settlement ... whereas direct questions, challenges, insults may provoke violence, indirect speech preserves social relationships while still conveying information about the contentious issues.
(Strathern, 1975: 79)

The use of 'hard words', in this view, is seen as stripping away any ambiguity and, as Weiner (1984) considers, pushes the heavy dimension of truth into the public arena. Since there is always some danger attached to doing precisely this - not only in public and political arenas but also in the context of interpersonal relations - members frequently endeavour to control, in varying degrees, their use of hard words in order, primarily, to maintain a semblance of social order. For, as is somewhat obvious, if members simply spoke their mind all the time there would be endless confrontations and potential chaos. So, in the same way that it has been suggested members learn implicit rules of fighting - displays of aggression and violence - so commonsense suggests, they must also learn when continuing to use hard words is likely to result in actual fighting or, indeed, the uncontrolled escalation of fighting and revenge. As Weiner suggests in respect to the Trobrianders, there is extreme caution about what is said and how it is said, and it is taken for granted that 'the words you say to someone are not the words you think' since, if you were to say what you think about certain events or individuals, then things would quickly escalate to fighting, hence:

... When individuals speak with each other in all interactional domains (except the most private recesses of one's house) an awareness always exists that behind each face and each verbal interaction lie the hidden, dangerous, autonomous dimensions of what a person really thinks. (Weiner, 1984: 169)

So, whether for traditional Trobrianders or members of western societies, it is much the case that a degree of vagueness, ambiguity, the use of verbal disguises and dissembling provides members with the opportunity to publicly deny what it is they know, even though both parties know - and are known to know - the reality of the situation. So, the 'I tell them as I see it' use of direct and hard words has vast

implications in the context of everyday interaction in the Shankill. For, most decidedly, the use of such a style of speech does not constitute any meaningful attempt on the part of members to either speak with 'great caution' or be seen to purposefully attempt to limit the potential escalation of confrontation. Rather, such usage actively encourages a disputational, argumentative form of dialogue or 'banter' in which there is little room, in practice, for members to shift, adjust, modify or 'back down' from any position they adopt; a situation which is, in respect to Shankill members, doubly compounded due to the high regard placed upon issues of personal pride and shame.

One might argue that within the Shankill community - that is in terms of members' routine dealings with each other - there is quite frequent use of hard words in the direct and forthright communication of local knowledge. Indeed, there appears to be a personal premium to be gained from being known as a person who 'speaks their mind' for, as might be understood, to feel able to speak one's mind is evidence of a strength or quality of character and, by implication, a certain social standing. Of course, this is not to suggest that there are not aspects of members' lives, as clearly noted in an earlier chapter, which they endeavour to conceal and would never dream of talking openly or directly about. However, it is much the case that when they are prepared to share opinions, views, knowledge of events and situations - that is, to tell others what they think and 'as they see it' - it tends to be anything but indirect and cautious. In being quite blunt, forthright and direct, members frequently are seen to risk causing all sorts of confrontations - as described in the previous chapter of Olive and her interfering mother - which, on occasion, may rapidly escalate and result in the use of physical violence.

There is much, therefore, routinely on-going in everyday interaction between Shankill members which is indicative of a taken for granted confrontational streak running through much of what members do and how they are expected to do it. This is

reflected, in a sense, in the way in which members are clearly expected to speak their minds or 'get it off their chest' and, in having done so, to doggedly stand by what they have said and what they might have been seen to do. And, throughout the account of the Shankill Man this *positioning* is quite evident and no more so than when he is talking about confrontation, conflict and violence itself:

- I've always made it known that I didn't think violence was the answer. Now that's not to say that there weren't times when I didn't react and say, 'The dirty murdering bastards!'

- Somebody once referred to me as the conscience of the UVF. But that is me. That's what I want to be.

- Even the hardmen of the Organisation have said (it) to me ... They're aware if something's not right that I'd take them to task over it ... I do think they respect what I have to say and they're prepared to listen.

Indeed, this directness and social *positioning* - the 'I tell it as I see it' syndrome - might be described as somewhat characteristic of members' public speech in which the use of hard words is, in a very meaningful sense, considered the province of hardmen; a category of person, rather than males, who are the epitome of *real* Shankill men and women. And, perhaps, the most salient aspect of this 'different breed of people', as described by the Shankill Man, is their readiness and courage to be seen to speak their mind; that is to tell the 'truth' of a situation as they see it and to, in their everyday practice, continually risk potential confrontation which they know from experience the use of such hard words is likely to result in. Of course, not everyone on every occasion proffer versions which even approximate to the 'truth' of a matter as they see it. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the use of hard words is a preferred Shankill way of going about one's routine business. And, most, if not all members, will rank the person who is prepared to speak their mind and stand their ground far above those who are seen to 'speak with great caution', to engage in 'veiled speech' and ambiguity.

The 'I tell it as I see it' syndrome running through much of everyday and indicative of a naturally confrontational streak, in part, may be seen to describe a peculiarly Shankill Road version of working class Protestantism. It also, in a broad sense, describes one significant dimension within which to locate an understanding of displays of aggression and violence within this ethnographic context. Since there is a members' expectation that they should speak their minds, that they should stand their ground, so to do otherwise constitutes 'losing face' and the burden of shame which accompanies it. As such, it is much taken for granted that the use of 'hard words' will provoke head-on confrontations which, almost inevitably and quite necessarily, will result in shows of aggression if not outright violence. And, indeed, members might publicly condemn outright shows of aggression and violence but as the Shankill Man says:

- I can understand it ... there are occasions when it's difficult not to understand that people feel really angry and feel the need to punish.

In viewing confrontations as an expected ingredient of everyday interaction, and in knowing these confrontations to often escalate to physical assault so one might assume that displays of aggression and violence in Shankill life will, in a real sense, be considered 'normal'. That, for instance, there will be no particular stigma or shame attached to verbal confrontations between family members or between neighbours nor, it might be assumed, to overt displays of aggression or violence that might follow. Perhaps, an insight to this *normalisation* - a non-stigmatised view - of displays of aggression and violence might be gleaned from Molly's account of the Shankill way of doing things; a way which she discovered was somewhat at odds with her working class Ulster Protestant background.

First, in reference to her son's direct involvement with violence, his paramilitary membership and imprisonment, Molly talks often about the shame that she felt at knowing of her son's paramilitary activities. It was such a burden of shame,

in fact, that she felt unable to face those within her own community and so moved to Belfast and to the Shankill. However, when talking of paramilitary violence, as she notes, there was definitely not the same shame or stigma attached to Shankill members' involvement in violent activities, in their imprisonment, nor in their association with organisations known to sponsor such acts of aggression, as she had experienced in the context of her own family and working life. As she says:

- My Ma wouldn't have looked at them, for everyone was in the Organisation was the lowest of the scum. ... But, I don't think anybody here would look down on you if your son was in. I'm content here, like I really am content here.

- Families here, though, all stayed together. They seemed to think they were heroes. Well that was never our policy.

- Then my sister said to me, "Did our Linda want a paramilitary type funeral?" 'Well, I hope not! For, if it is, I'll not be there!'

Then, as she reiterates throughout her narrative, her impressions of the Shankill prior to her son taking up residence was that it was peopled by an unruly breed of 'hoodlums' - a word she uses consistently to describe her early feelings about the Loyalist paramilitaries - who all 'had guns at the ready' and that, by implication, this was a dangerous and hostile place to live. Most of this impression was founded on the known association of the Shankill Road community with various paramilitary organisations and with the many stories and rumours of paramilitary activities which abound throughout the Province. As such, Molly's view of Loyalist paramilitarism was one in which:

- You see, my theory was they were all a load of gangsters and hoodlum that Billy had just got mixed up with them.

- I had no time for these paramilitary ones. That was always my theory, you know, right through when he did the time and all. Everybody was hoodlums.

And, certainly, as the Shankill Man suggests, not all members of paramilitary organisations have joined for what he considers to be the right reasons. Indeed, one is bound to find within their ranks those who used the cover the organisation to play-out

their own sadistic agendas. Yet, in saying as much, it is clear from the Shankill Man's account that as many have joined the organisations for what he considers to be the right reasons and these members have provided him with much comradeship and support:

- A paramilitary, I would say, is someone who's fighting for what he believes in and is doing it the best way that he thinks he can ... I'm not saying all paramilitaries are like that cos a lot of young people get caught up with, err, they see a certain amount of glamour in belonging

- I've developed a great comradeship within the Organisation. ... I certainly find it a great source of strength ... it's hard, it's extremely difficult to divorce the personal life from the organisation.

As is evident throughout the account of the Shankill Man when referring to displays of aggression and violence in the community - and, as associated with the paramilitaries in particular - there has to be a limit to the potential destructiveness and chaos of unmeasured spirals of aggressive and violent behaviour. This limit is quite effectively described in the context of the Shankill Man's account by virtue of his recognition of the need to accomplish two inter-related tasks:

- First, to be seen to formulate procedures for enacting and resolving violent outbursts. This is, in part, illustrated by the Shankill Man's reference to the need for certain forms of physical punishment to be metered out; forms which, in an important sense, are highly ritualised occasions which provide a 'public' show - for they are very 'public' shows - of strength. The adoption and enactment of such procedures not only acts as a deterrent but, where relevant, are seen to minimise the risk of uncontrolled spirals of violence and revenge.
- Second, to be seen to develop and positively condone what might be described as anti-violent values; that is values which express the way in which members *should* resolve their differences if circumstances permitted and if, perhaps, we lived in an ideal world. This the Shankill Man achieves

through his persistent emphasis on the abhorrence of violence. The existence of such values - an anti-violent value system - enables members, so it is commonly considered, to avoid being caught up in an endless round of revenge without, in effect, being seen to 'lose face'.

Very few societies throughout history have been described as having truly anti-violent value systems; that is systems of values which, as Gregor (1990) writes, stigmatise quarrelling, boasting, stinginess, anger and uncontrolled displays of violence. However, those which do fall within this category - the Buid, Semai, Xinguano, Eskimos - are generally portrayed as having value systems which accord much prestige to generosity, gentleness and to conflict avoidance which is evident in their long histories of relative peace on a societal level even though, as acknowledged, violence among members on an interpersonal basis does occur. What is significant, given this discussion, is that violence on an interpersonal level rarely, if ever, is allowed to escalate beyond its first expression. Hence, as Gregor (1990) says of the Xinguanos:

... What is striking about the Xinguanos is that they are peaceful ... there is no tradition of violence among the Xingu communities. In fact, the value systems of these communities are 'anti-violent' in nature. Supernatural sanctions inhibit the expression of aggression, and prestige is awarded to men who avoid conflict, and methods of socialising children discourage displays of anger. (Gregor, 1990: 105-6)

And, as Robarchek (1990) found amongst the Semai:

... social life to be virtually free of interpersonal violence. This is not to say, however, that the community was free of conflict. Pettiness, jealousy, theft, gossip, disputes over property and marital infidelities, and so on were as common as they probably are in any small group of people. What was remarkable was that, unlike in most societies, these conflicts never resulted in violence.

... In a reality so defined, violence simply does not come to be seen as a means of settling disputes or resolving difficulties... (and) ... children are given little opportunity to utilise violence. (Robarchek, 1990: 57, 68)

Briefly, another example of a society in which anti-violent values are positively condoned is that of the Buid of S E Asia. Amongst these people it is interesting that no word for *courage*, in the sense of a positively valued aggressive attitude in the face of physical danger, exists. Instead, as Gibson (1990) found, the Buid reject any form

of violence or aggression even what might be interpreted as simple competition. Quarrelling is itself considered by the Buid to have mystically dangerous consequences and, as such, potentially antagonistic traits are afforded a heavy negative sanction such that:

... Rather than compete in performing acts of courage, Buid youth are most likely to spend their time learning love poems with which to court young girls ... (so) seduction is not associated with aggression among the Buid as in other cultures which value aggressiveness in men. (Gibson, 1990: 131)

Somewhat in contrast to descriptions of societies in which displays of aggression and violence have a heavy negative sanction, is the impression presented by McFarlane (1986), Buckley (1984), Feldman (1991) of working class Ulster Protestants which is, perhaps, quite the opposite; a 'jack the lad', competitive and contentious bravado which describes, in Buckley's terms, an acceptable style of roughness. And, as has been suggested here, what is distinctive of Shankill people is not so much a stigmatisation of quarrelling, of boasting and of anger but, rather, their acceptance of these within the context of everyday interaction leading to a high expectation that confrontation of some sort is inevitable. Indeed, Shankill people might be described as positively condoning the use of hard words known to be dangerous and, thereby, persistently risking confrontations which, interestingly, is in direct contrast to the Xinguanos mentioned above for whom what is acceptable and 'good' is defined in terms of members ability to be:

... circumscribed in his behaviour, he avoids confrontations, and he rarely shows anger. ... The good citizen is peaceful because he responds to the feelings of others. He refrains from injuring them because he would 'feel sad' and sense their pain as if it were his own. The violent man lacks the requisite sensitivity and kills and maims others, often without motive. He beats and torments his children, and 'it is for this reason that his children do not sense others feelings when they are adults. (Gregor, 1990: 110)

Such a description of acceptable or 'normal' behaviour for the Xinguanos is clearly different to the description afforded of Shankill members' expectations for them, in contrast, place much emphasis upon displays of courage, of fearlessness, of toughness, bravery, strength, and the like. And, indeed, members' regular use of

terminology such as *hardmen* signifies the importance attributed to such displays. Hence, in the same way that, for instance, the Yanomamo man is expected to actively display his *waiteri* - ferocity - so Shankill men are expected to display their masculinity in shows of strength, fearlessness, and a willingness to risk confrontation. All of these characteristics or qualities are illustrated throughout the account of the Shankill Man who is, constantly, at pains to talk of deeds which illustrate his courage, his will power and determination, his fearlessness in the face of adversaries, and his abiding strength and fortitude in the face of tremendous odds. Given such a description of members' expectations their *self* and *others* in this context - the boundaries of the acceptable - so we may begin to appreciate what is considered 'normal' in this ethnographic context. For, as Molly discovered, even those she thought to be little more than 'gangsters and hoodlums', who she knew to have been involved in acts of extreme violence, turned out to be 'really nice fellows' who, in her words, were 'just normal people'.

Hard Words and Hardmen: 'Ashamed! What were you ashamed of?'

Although talking of different dimensions of aggressive or violent behaviour when addressing:

- On the one hand, an everyday confrontational stance as exhibited in a routine use of 'hard words' and - using Buckley's terminology - a roughness of approach toward others, and
- On the other hand, the various so-called high profile activities of paramilitaries.

These various expressions, on the whole, are indicative of a style of response to events and situations that might be seen, as Chagnon says of the Yanomamo, to be 'shaping culture'. What Chagnon identified as impressive amongst the Yanomamo, for example, was the importance that aggression played in all spheres of Yanomamo culture to the extent that he suspected:

... the frequency of wife-beating is a component of this syndrome, since men can display their waiteri, and 'show' others that they are capable of great violence. Beating a wife with a club is one way of displaying ferocity, one that does not expose the man to much danger ... Apparently an important thing in wife beating is that the man has displayed his presumed potential for violence and the intended message is that other men ought to treat him with circumspection, caution and even deference.' (Chagnon, 1992: 17)

Qualities of fierceness and strength of character, which manifest in frequent displays of aggression so admired by the Yanomamo, are similarly respected by members of many other cultural collectivities who, like the Gisu studied by Heald (1989), have regular displays of interpersonal violence. The Gisu are particularly interesting given this discussion since they have, quite literally, cultivated and indulged a reputation for ferocity and violence. Indeed, they were described by British colonialists as perhaps the wildest people to be found who saw fierceness as a decidedly positive attribute. Interestingly, the Gisu do not identify themselves collectively as a *people*, the most common ethnic label, but as *men*. And, as Heald notes, the Gisu sense of the collectivity is tied to the concept of *manhood*:

... Gisu men are expected to stand up for their rights in everyday life and all grievances thus carry with them the threat of retaliation. ... They, as Gisu men, had no fear of acting violently and killing. ... There was no reluctance for one does not act violently by half-measures. ... Violence and killing did not happen by default, but were an expression of male purpose. (Heald, 1989: 57)

It is quite evident from this study of the Gisu, in particular, that when displays of anger and violence are known to be constant possibilities, a man's character is described very much in terms of how he expresses and controls his fierceness; in Gisu terminology, his *lirima*. And, like the hardmen of the Shankill - as both traditionally and contemporaneously described by the Shankill Man - a 'real' man of the Gisu has all the strengths associated with fierceness and is quite capable, as Heald describes, of expressing his anger in violent outbursts which indicate to others that:

- he is avenging and placating potential shame,
- he has his own toughness and is self-sufficient,
- he is self-reliant and can make his own decisions and,
- he is well capable of redressing wrongs done to him.

However, in addition to these qualities defining fierceness, it is also known that a really fierce Gisu man has the ability to be quite magnanimous in the control of his anger. Hence, as long as there is no doubt as to his ability to express anger and triumph over opponents, a truly fierce Gisu man may use tried and tested ways - often highly ritualised and formulaic - to express grievances so that disputes are settled before they become violent. In other words, as Fox found amongst the Tory Islanders and as Girard describes in the context of ritualised procedures which stave off the spiral of revenge, it is much the case that even when displays of aggression and violence are considered *normal* within a cultural collectivity, members often choose to go through the motions - re-enact a ritualised procedure of overt confrontation - rather than engaging in actual physical combat. They will opt for this less overtly combative stance when, for instance, there is no doubt as to their strength and this is not directly questioned. In going through the ritualised procedures members, in practice, let each other know that 'they are willing' and, thereby, still lay claim to being 'real' men.

What is perhaps the defining characteristic of the truly brave and fierce men of traditional societies, of the Gisu, the Tausug, amongst many others, is the importance they attach to the quality of magnanimity whereby they are not seen to indulge in gratuitous violence. A man who by choice refuses to be violent, who is seen to control his anger and desire for revenge, as long as it is clear that he has the capacity and would normally be willing to fight, is regarded highly within these traditional societies. And, it is this quality of magnanimity,

- a quality of 'greatness of soul (and of) mind which raises a person above all that is mean and unjust' (Chambers Dictionary, 1980 Edition)

that is, also, considered the hallmark of Ulster's traditional hardmen. As Feldman cites from a number of respondents:

... there's a terrible difference between that (a hardman who terrorised women or young people or engaged in petty thieving) and the man who stands on his own two feet and says, 'Okay, I'll take your best man and fight him. ... There was no dirt in it! ... People of my age (mid 50s) who were in a good number of fights find it hard to take the brutality of these days. (Feldman, 1991: 52-2)

In this view, fighting or 'risking the body' was a means of establishing a reputation within the community and hardmen commanded an impressive status amongst their peers; a status founded upon their willingness to take physical risks and their success as clean fighters. However, it was the quality of magnanimity that was and, as will be argued, still is as highly regarded - if not more highly regarded - than the actual ability to box or an individual's willingness to risk their personal safety. As the Shankill Man suggests, in the context of contemporary Shankill life, he is quite prepared to risk his personal safety and accept a challenge but, in knowing his 'strength' as an individual and respected paramilitary he would not use his position for gratuitous gain. As he says:

- I've spoken out against people who had the reputation of 'would take you out as quick as they'd look at you.'

- But I don't see myself as a hero, you know. ... As a young man ... I preferred verbal exchanges rather than physical exchanges. I was the guy who would always try and stop the fight, sometimes at great risk to myself too!

- But I've never used the Organisation in my life for my own ends. ... I would never try to use it or use the veiled sort of threat that, 'Look if you don't sort of do what I say the Organisation will come down on you!' Never done that in my life. And people know that I don't do that.

What the Shankill Man describes, here, is a willingness to still 'risk his body' (Feldman, 1991) and reputation - of course, in a different form to traditional hardmen - while also being seen to be somewhat magnanimous in his dealings. Indeed, what he illustrates throughout his narrative is a desire, perhaps, to be actually seen - as an individual and known member of an influential paramilitary organisation - to rise above such pettiness and not indulge in what might be construed as simply mean and unjust behaviours.

So, although, the quality of magnanimity is, for instance, in Feldman's view considered a thing of the past, applicable to by-gone days of Belfast's traditional

hardmen who were considered 'visible' and 'straightforward' in their dealings, it would be true to say that this is still a quality which is equally highly prized and respected amongst contemporary Shankill members. Present-day Shankill hardmen, it is acknowledged, might engage in different forms of violent activity and seek to protect their 'visibility' from forces of law and order but, even so, there is little doubt that they are quite *visible* - known and easily identifiable - within their own neighbourhood and community and, as likely to be as magnanimous in their dealings as any of their predecessors. Indeed, there is much romanticising about the halcyon pre-war days when it is widely presumed members' way of life was qualitatively different in all spheres to that of today. The truth of the matter, as contemporary Shankill members recall, is that those so-called halcyon days were as chequered with hardship, rogues and dealers, and, no doubt, 'hoodlums', as is found today.

There was a very big boxing fraternity on the Shankill Road as well. That was one cheap sport. ... Our church had a boxing team so if you wanted to learn about boxing you went to the church. That was the social life!

My Uncle M. was the exception to every rule ... he sort of way did his own thing! He was a bare-knuckle fighter. And, he was a bit of a character and a bit of a dealer. He bought and sold things and that's how he made his money. And, he also bred pigs. He's a place in Whitewell on the outskirts of Belfast. And he made a fair bit of money out of it! (Shankill Resident: Recorded Biography, 1996)

Hence, for members, at least, it is quite self-evident that as many today - as did fifty years ago - on occasion will act quite unscrupulously and, no doubt, are anything but magnanimous in their dealings. Yet, members' awareness of this double-standard in their common practice does not, of itself, detract from the importance which is still commonly attached to this quality of magnanimity; it is as expected of those who exhibit strength and standing within the community to act magnanimously as it is for those who, by these same standards, are seen as weak and unreliable to act quite mercenarily.

So, even though Shankill people appear to routinely adopt a confrontational style - as evidenced in their preferred use of hard words - much of the physical violence which does erupt within the community appears to hinge, or be dependent,

upon members' understanding of the concept of shame since, it might be argued, it is much the case that simply the refusal to respond when confronted is, in itself, considered inherently shameful. Again, the salience of feelings of shame attaching to a refusal to respond might be described by reference to another cultural context, that of the Tausug amongst whom, as Kiefer (1972) points out:

... Tausug are a violent people who believe in physical force, they are not a bellicose and warlike people. The hero is not the bully, but the man who does what he has to do when shame must be erased and honour restored. (Kiefer, 1972: 54)

As with the Gisu, mentioned above, there is much emphasis placed upon bravery amongst the Tausug and a *maisug* person, a very masculine concept, is both:

- brave, combative and never deterred by physical danger or risk and,
- expected to have strong feelings which are readily expressed.

Such a man is considered to be extremely quick to anger – hot livered - and his refusal to respond to insults or attacks would be considered shameful and a show of public cowardice. Hence, insults call for retaliation and deaths must be avenged. A *maisug* man simply cannot carry shame with him and still retain his manhood. So, at the end of the Tausug day he, quite simply, has no choice but to ensure that his shame is erased and his self-image restored to that of a brave, *maisug*, man.

It might be argued that for very similar reasons both Shankill men and women will feel obliged to respond, whether verbally or physically, to what they perceive as slights to their character, their sense of self, their family, their community. They are intensely defensive of what they consider to be their 'good' name and social standing within their family grouping, their neighbourhood and the broader community and, for the most part would never dream of walking away from an argument; of being seen to turn the proverbial other cheek unless, of course, they considered their opponents to be totally unworthy and undeserving of the challenge. So, although it came as somewhat of a surprise to Molly, Shankill people attach little shame to overt confrontation for, similar to the Tausug, it is understood and much taken for granted that insults call for retaliation and 'deaths', figuratively, need be avenged. Shankill

Road members, indeed, can not be seen to carry shame with them and still retain their sense of 'personhood' - manhood or womanhood - within this community. As Molly reiterates:

- When I said I was so ashamed, 'Ashamed! What were you ashamed of?' she says, 'I wasn't ashamed.' Her father and her husband were both in but they are quite proud. ... Olive says, 'I'm sure they thought their father was a hero.' ... I thought it was terrible that somebody belonged to you would go out and do that!

- They may have stuck together but we had nobody ... I believe it was my duty to stick to Billy ... but I didn't approve of what he had done.

- But, I don't think anybody here would look down on you if your son was in.

In appreciating that it is largely the refusal to respond when confronted which is, in itself, considered inherently shameful, an understanding might be gleaned as to why Shankill Road people are, in practice, so supportive - so 'proud' - of those who are still seen to risk their bodies, their lives, their freedom, on behalf of others. For, even in knowing that there are as many scoundrels and rogues in the community as honourable and magnanimous people, that one is seen to confront opponents and, thereby, stave-off the shame which is a natural corollary to a refusal to do so, is still - whether one is a rogue or a hero - resoundingly important in the context of everyday life. In other words, it may well be an implicit everyday rule but one which is, nevertheless, set in concrete this being; that one cannot be seen to leave a challenge unanswered and not incur a debt of shame.

It is much because of the way in which members structure their lives in accordance with a seemingly rigid criterion of pride and shame that, in practice, there is so much potential confrontation in their lives. When such a high premium is placed on placating one's sense of pride then, as commonsense indicates, it is almost impossible for one to be seen to walk away from an argument. That members are often seen to retaliate - to argue and fight back - is seen as quite 'normal' in this

ethnographic context. Indeed, if members did not respond, were not seen to retaliate and avenge their wounded sense of pride that, in practice, would be seen as an 'abnormal' and an uncharacteristic Shankill response.

Hence, much as Molly discovered when introduced to Shankill members who, like her son, had been involved in some of the most extreme, high profile, forms of violence associated with paramilitary activities, these people were not simply a 'load of gangsters and hoodlums'. As she recounts:

- I says, 'I can't get over that, they're really nice fellows!' Billy says, 'Yes mum. Just as you said that day you were in B. Street. You said they all looked like normal people!' He says, 'You know we all were normal people but caught up in terrible circumstances.'

- You see, I thought he was the only good one in ... and I didn't want to associate with them ... Not until I got really to know them. Then they couldn't be nicer and they were so supportive.

Indeed, although there is little doubt that Molly would also find in the Shankill members who are shameless mercenaries - in Harris' words, the 'mindlessly violent' - with little in the way of integrity or magnanimity to their credit it would, even so, be reasonable to say that Shankill people still commonly admire such qualities even though - and, in this context, time and history may well have stood still - they find it somewhat difficult to always practice what they preach. As Molly, says at the outset, there are always those who are 'good at telling what should be done ... but they don't want their wee boys to go out and do it!' These members, she continues, 'They're the first to condemn.'

Molly's Version: 'Coffee please, black coffee.'... Oh, then you must have been in the same hotel as Billy!

THESE PEOPLE, THEY'RE GOOD AT TELLING WHAT SHOULD BE DONE. They want this done, 'Oh shoot the whole lot of them!' But they don't want their wee

boys to go out and do it. They don't want to do it. They don't want to run the risk of their sons going into prison or them going into prison. But they want somebody else to do it!

They're the first to condemn, 'Oh her son was in for murder. He was a bad'un. He was doing this, or he did that.' Yet they would be saying, 'Ach, our ones should do this and do that.' But they don't want their families to do it. They want to keep their own wee ones nice. Let some other fool go out and do it.

'There', I says to Tom, 'would you like your two to go out and do it?' He says, 'I'll go and do it myself!' I says, 'They'll not take an old man of 70 to shoot! If the Troubles goes on another lot of years would you like the two wee grandsons to go out?' 'I'd like to think it'd be over before they get up!' I says, 'Aye, But you don't want your two to go out and do it!' You know, he thinks everybody should do it. But you don't want yours to go out and do it.

BUT, YOU SEE, I REMEMBER THE GOLDEN RULE, 'Don't do unto others as you wouldn't like them to do unto you.' And that is right, isn't it? My mummy she used to say that. She would never condemn anybody. Never would at all.

Whenever we were at school, there used to be penmanship and you had to write the same thing, maybe two or three pages and I remember one of the things, I never forgot it, "There's so much bad in the best of us and there's so much good in the worst of us, that it ill behoves any of us to talk about the rest of us!" And, isn't it very true because no matter how bad somebody is, there's always a good point in them.

WELL THE FIRST CHRISTMAS THEY (Loyalist Prisoners) got out they had a do, a party for them all getting out. Billy says, 'Mum go.' I says, 'I'm not going up the Shankill.'

I was always afraid of the Shankill, you see. Terrified of the Shankill. He says, 'Look mum, I want you to come and you'll do me a very big honour if you come. Please mum, come.' Our Linda says, 'You'd better go.'

So we went up, oh aye, we went up the Shankill to B. Street and there was a whole do! And what did I say! They got them, all the boys that was out for to get their photograph taken.

Oh, there was crowds of them, thirty or forty of them, maybe more, on this Christmas parole. And I said to Billy, when I sat and looked at them fellows all in for murder, I says like, 'They all look like normal people.' I didn't realise what I had said! He said, 'Yes!'

You see, my theory was they were all a load of gangsters and hoodlums that Billy had just got mixed up with them. I had no time for these paramilitary ones. That was always my theory, you know, right through when he did the time and all. Everybody was hoodlums. That Billy had just got mixed up with them. Only Billy to me, he was the only good one in, which is stupid now, when you look at it.

YOU SEE I WAS ALWAYS AFRAID OF GETTING with all these boy-ohs. I'd always been afraid of them. So, then, whenever Billy took ill I went up the Shankill to visit and Billy's doorbell went. Well, these two big fellows, beautifully dressed, wee suits and their white collars and that and they says, 'Billy S. live here?' I says, 'Yes!' 'Can we see him?' I says, 'Come on up.'

I thought these were two detectives. That he must have had something to do with some trouble. You know my mind working overtime! They says, 'Well Billy, how are you?' And, they shook hands and all the rest of it. So I says, 'Would you like a cup of tea or coffee?' They said, 'Yes, if you don't mind.' I says, 'Which would you like?' 'Coffee please, black coffee.' 'Oh', I says, 'you're friends of Billy's! Oh, then, you must have been in the same hotel as Billy!'

You see I'd went into the kitchen to leave them. I'd thought they were detectives. Well once they'd all said 'Black coffee, no sugar' I knew right away. But they were that nice. They came up and I said, 'They're really nice. Very nice fellows.' And, Billy says, 'Yes, mum.'

Well then, another day, another two came and they were so nicely dressed and so nice fellows, you know, they were lovely. And, 'Tea or coffee?' 'Black coffee please!'

I SAYS, 'I CAN'T GET OVER THAT!' Billy says, 'Yes, mum. Just as you said that day that you were in B. Street. You said they all looked normal people!' He says, 'You know we all were normal people but caught up in terrible circumstances.' I thought, well after all

these years, he must have been cut to the bone me saying that! I was embarrassed then. I never meant it.

I thought they were all hoodlums and Billy was the only good one in there and I didn't want to associate with them all coming up from the Kesh. Not until I got really to know them. Then they couldn't be nicer and they were so supportive.

When Billy said, 'We were so close together,' that never hit me either! If you look, not even your brother in the house, for you'd have been going out at nights or working all day, but they were there twenty-four hours a day together. So, they must have really got very close. I never realised until Billy took ill how close they'd all got.

HE WAS DELIGHTED TO SEE THEM all coming up to see him. Like B.C, he's older now. I would say he's in his forties and he's 'saved' He's a Christian. They wouldn't let him into the B. Specials, or something to that effect, so, he says, 'Then I joined the next best thing. I joined the UVF'.

He said to me, 'We were in there, we were all together and we were all supporting one another. We hadn't our freedom when we were lifted but we were all happy enough in there together.'

'But it broke my mother's heart', he says. 'When you're young you do the things, but my mother paid the penalty more!' I says, 'Aye, I know, because my best friend was killed in the Rose and Crown then his wife died of a broken heart!' B.C. then says, 'Oh aye, the Rose and Crown, that was G. and big R.' I says, 'What! It was what!' That night I went up to the tea room and big R. was there and what did I say? 'I heard about you tonight!'

He says, 'What did you hear?' I said, 'I know what you did and what you were inside for. You know, you didn't only kill those men but you killed his wife too. She was my best friend.' He says, 'I know, I know.' He didn't know what to say.

BUT I HAD A QUEER CHEEK TO SAY THAT TO HIM! I says, 'You didn't know that she died of a broken heart? I know for sure I saw you one time up at the Kesh and Billy told me you were good friends.' I says, 'It was terrible, terrible!' And I went on and on.

When I got home I says, 'I have a queer cheek. All he had to say was, "What was your Billy in for?"' That was all he had to do! So, then, he came up one night and I says, 'I owe you an apology.' He says, 'No you don't'. I says, 'I really shouldn't have said that to you. I had no right to say that but I was so taken aback. We were such good friends.' All you'd to say to me was "What did Billy do? What was he in for?"' 'Och, I know, I was only young then. I was only sixteen.'

BUT THAT'S WHAT IT'S LIKE. And then when Lena phoned me there, she says, 'Did you hear the news? Peace talks fallen through and this bomb in London?' 'Say what!' I says, 'My God and I'm stuck up here in the Shankill among them!' That's what I said right away. 'Oh', I says, 'my God and I'm up here in the Shankill!' That was my first reaction, 'Oh, my God, and I'm up and among them!'

And Lena says, 'You're alright!' She says, 'You're in among them and they'll protect you. You'll be alright!'

Contextualising Morality: 'I'm not religious but I'm God-fearing!'

**A Shankill Man: 'Obviously the Troubles have spawned, maybe, a different
type of person'**

I'M NOT RELIGIOUS BUT I'M GOD-FEARING, you know! I don't know whether that's a contradiction or not but I still view myself as a God-fearing person, although I'm not a born-again Christian and I wouldn't sort of be cynical or look down on anyone who was.

We have had guys, some of the hardest guys that you would think you would ever meet, they've turned to the Lord. There would be people would be derisory about that, but I wouldn't be. I fully respect them for what they do. As I say, I'm pretty much aware that I do believe that there is a God.

Sometimes I've actually questioned my own motives in that nothing gives me greater pleasure than helping somebody. No matter who they are or what they've done. And, sometimes, I question my own motives and say; 'Now am I doing that for that person, or is it because I get so much satisfaction myself out of it?' And I have asked myself that question, you know. Well, I like to think it's to help someone. It's just my nature. But I do get the greatest satisfaction out of helping somebody.

NOW I DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT'S BECAUSE I'M GOD-FEARING it would stop me, but I certainly could never, ever, be part of anybody's life being taken. I couldn't stand by and watch somebody getting beat and I will always, always, try to prevent a thing like that happening. Whether you put that down to my god-fearing attitude or not I don't know. But that's just the way I am. And, yes, I could have finished in jail myself and I would, certainly,

have never have saw the inside of a prison. So, it's a case of 'There but for the grace of God go I', you know.

Most of the prisoners, OK, so there's some bad, bad boys about which there are in all societies, but in Northern Ireland I think was the lowest crime rate in the whole of western Europe. Yes, in the whole of western Europe I think the crime rate in Northern Ireland was the lowest! So, I mean, that says something.

Whereas prison used to be shameful, something to be ashamed of in your family or family history, it's no longer viewed like that here. Obviously the Troubles have spawned, maybe, a different type of person. I mean, young lads growing up now never saw anything else only trouble. Some would even look on prison as a status symbol until, maybe, they go in! Then, OK, they suffer while there in but when they come out again they're shooting their chest out, 'I done four years!' and 'I done eight years!' You know. So, they may have started to breed a different type of person.

SO, I AM GOD-FEARING. But it wouldn't be right to say that I don't have my doubts at times. You know when I see some of the things that happen to people I say to myself, 'If there really is a God why does he allow things like that to happen?' I do question a lot of times but, at the end of the day, I do believe there's a God and I would hope to be saved in Biblical terms, or whatever, before I die. I wouldn't like to die without accepting God as, what it's called, as a born-again Christian. So, I'm not totally convinced that there is a life hereafter, you know. But I wouldn't, maybe, want to take the chance.

AND, I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE HYPOCRITICAL about it. I wouldn't want to confess to be a Christian and do things that would be against the teachings of the Bible. I've thought long and hard about that and I wouldn't want to commit myself unless I could commit myself fully. I don't think that I'm just ready to do that yet. I know you can't keep putting it off because you might be just taken out of this life without any warning but, there again, there's aspects of my life that I don't know that I could change!

My biggest problem, I'd say, would be some of my philandering! I don't drink, I take an odd social drink, and I don't smoke. I lead a relatively good life and I don't do anybody any harm. I only try to do good for people. And, I would never make a politician in that I'm not a good liar.

That's a wee bit of contradiction in itself because I find it very, very, difficult to tell lies except to cover for my philandering. Then I have to! It's a necessity. But, by and large, I do have a problem with being untruthful because I always find that if you're truthful, you know, they respect you for it. They might not always like what they're hearing but at least they respect you and they know you're not going to tell them any lies. Is that a contradiction; that it's not a problem telling females lies to cover my other activities?

A God-fearing Morality: 'Aye, Ruby said that too, 'I'm not a church-goer but I'm very God-fearing'

If simply selecting one or other routine aspect of Shankill Road members' everyday practice - perhaps, their troubled working lives, black-market activities, seemingly 'hectic' personal relations, paramilitary involvement, somewhat erratic church attendance, or any other issue facing young and older members of this socially and economically deprived Belfast district - an impression of a way of life might be gleaned which suggests that this is, indeed, a place one goes when, as Molly recounts, 'going from bad to worse'; for these are a people who have often afforded an appearance of being 'rough and ready', somewhat of a law unto themselves:

- She says, 'She's what! What in the name of God is she doing up the Shankill? In the name of God what possessed her to go up there? Are you serious? Is she going from bad to worse?'

- She never mentioned coming to see me again. Margaret says, 'That changed the subject!' (Molly, 1996/7)

Indeed, similar to Robert's (1984) descriptions of urban working class life of the early twentieth century, contemporary Shankill people are frequently described by other working class Protestants - like Molly, her family and friends - as having a

qualitatively different lifestyle to that which is generally considered the working class Protestant norm; as being, perhaps, more than a little 'un-godly', 'loud', 'showy', 'rough' and 'unruly':

- Everybody was going shooting, like! ... everybody had guns at the ready.
- wee small houses all shined up to the knocker
- And, all on benefits! ... they haven't the pride to go to work now ...
- Aye, there's some queer good wee bargains up the Shankill ...
- a long-suffering wee wife ... her husband drunk and all
- well, she's not from the Shankill if she's a virgin at forty!

And, of course, there are plenty of stories circulating amongst members of the broader Protestant community, let alone the media, which support such a view of life in the Shankill; stories of beatings and fights, of thuggery and hooliganism, of protection rackets, of drugs, drinking and gambling, of domestic violence and abuse, of sexual promiscuity and illegitimacy, of illegal deals and 'queer good wee bargains' to be had up the Shankill Road. And, as Molly recounts from her own and her Pastor's experience:

- The Pastor says about the young ones, you know the thugs, 'Well I'm sure young ones now, sure they've no respect! In my day we used to play ball, you know, on the street but if a minister, a nun, a priest, anybody, went up passed ... we stopped playing till they passed.'

- Sure, look at the language alone going up the streets now! It used to be if a fellow had of said 'f' in my company, 'Oh sorry!' Like it would have been terrible if they said bad words. But sure now they say it out in the streets. They don't care who hears them. ... But whether they went to church or not, people wouldn't have said that.

- And, you wouldn't have dared answer your mother back. You wouldn't dare! I wouldn't have dared answer an adult back. I never answered back till she was dead!

Much depending, therefore, upon which members' stories - their 'articulated particular descriptions' - are selected, any number of so-called generalised versions of a Shankill Road way of life may be described within which we might attempt to

locate what is, here, referred to as members' social context of morality. That is a context which, given this range of often nefarious and highly contradictory descriptive content, might range from:

- an image or impression of members as a totally unruly, rough and, for the most part, 'God-less' lot, much as described by McKittrick (1996) below:

... Most loyalist paramilitary people tend to be, if not actually godless, then tough men who are not regular church goers and are more often to be found in drinking dens than mission halls. (McKittrick, The Independent, 1996)

- to an image of members who, although affording an the appearance of being somewhat historically confused - that is, in view of what they as a community have experienced as *part* of the Protestant Ascendancy - even so, consider themselves to be both God-fearing and true to the 'form' if not the entire 'content' of that which describes their shared Ulster Protestant paradigm of knowledge.

As described by one Shankill woman who only sees the inside of a church at weddings, funerals and christenings and who, like any number of her neighbours enjoys the odd drink, line dancing, a good sing-song and Saturday night at the social club:

... Yes, I'm God-fearing and I think the majority of people are. Even now, you go to the churches here and they're half full. The Shankill though is not the most God-fearing place, but there's really not that much difference wherever you go. ... What it means to me? Respect for a Sunday. On a Sunday I wouldn't sew. On a Sunday I wouldn't cut my hair. Even now! There's a lot of things I wouldn't do on a Sunday. I wouldn't go to a bar, even though they're open now. And, that's pretty general for everyone. (Shankill Resident: Recorded Interview, 1997)

In Buckley's (1984) view, it is through an exploration of members' often vastly different and seemingly contradictory accounts - their articulated particular descriptions - that one might hope to discover *the shared paradigm which seems to underlie them*. This is a shared paradigm of local 'knowledge' which, in effect, affords this multifarious array of impressions some commonality - a common theme or structure - in light of which, in principle at least, it is possible to make some sense of an otherwise disparate and confusing ensemble. In adopting Buckley's line of

argument, the intention here is to describe certain ways in which Shankill members so often portrayed as a somewhat aberrant or rogue branch of an otherwise God-fearing and traditionally religious - in the sense of church attendance and worship - Protestant collectivity appear to quite similarly structure or make sense of that which constitutes their social context of morality; a context essentially described in terms of their generalised 'concern for others' (Kitwood, 1990). By doing so it is hoped to illustrate that although there appears to be much obvious *difference* in the 'content' of much describing members' everyday social context of morality there is, underlying, a similar and consistent use of a characteristically Ulster Protestant 'form' whereby members are seen to gauge what is right and wrong, fair and just, caring and considerate, in the context of their social relationships.

Referring briefly to Buckley's use of this style of cultural analysis, it is evident that he uses the notion of an articulated particular description to illustrate a dimension or characteristic of Ulster Protestant members' worldview described as their 'siege mentality' - a No, Never, No Surrender, stance - which, metaphorically, is depicted by an image of 'walls within walls' (Buckley, 1984). The use of this metaphorical image, so he suggests, best describes how members structure or organise important aspects of their lives at multifarious levels of social existence as if perpetually threatened by a hostile world beyond. Hence, the imagery of 'walls within walls' affords an impression of the way in which members are seen to order and make sense of much that is their everyday experience.

Bearing this use of poetic or metaphorical imagery in mind, it might be considered - if looking specifically to members' social context of morality - that in view of Shankill members' articulated accounts an equally invasive image which, indeed, they proffer of themselves is found in frequent references they make to being a *God-fearing* rather than God-less people. This being an image which, perhaps, stands in stark contrast to that often portrayed of members of this community

currently known only too well for activities associated with paramilitarism, sectarianism, violence and conflict. It is in view of such a members' self-description that it is suggested, whether or not Shankill members are considered to be regular church-goers or conventionally religious in the sense of strictly adhering to the 'content' of a moral ethos associated with their Protestant religious tradition that they, nevertheless, routinely interpret and make sense of much of what they do in relation to others in accordance with the 'form' laid down in their shared paradigm of Protestant knowledge.

So, although Shankill members are quite aware that often 'what they do' is somewhat at odds with what they know of a way of life as it *ought* to be lived, there is a real sense in which they still clearly accommodate themselves under the broad umbrella of their Protestant religious heritage by virtue of this self-description - and, of course, what this then entails in practice - as a *God-fearing* rather than God-less people. Indeed, Shankill members, quite irrespective of what they do and how they are seen to do it, would rarely if ever be heard describing themselves as God-less even though they readily admit, for instance, to not being 'saved', to being wary of that vociferous group of *born-again* Christians described by Molly as a 'pack of headers', and to not considering themselves to be church-goers:

- You see years ago people were all God fearing. Aye, Ruby said that too, 'I'm not a church goer but I'm very God fearing!'

And, indeed, as recognised and appreciated by members, there is often such a vast and obvious contradiction between, in Buckley's terminology, what they know to describe the 'content' of their shared paradigm of cultural and religious knowledge - the 'what they know' of a way of life as it *ought* to be lived, factor - and their articulated particular descriptions of what they do in practice that they, let alone outsiders, are genuinely amused by what is clearly perceived as the potential hypocrisy which their statements and activities, on occasion, exhibit.

A brief example of this almost inherent contradiction running through members' lives - between what they know of a way of life as it *ought* to be lived and how they live that life in practice - is found in the account of the Shankill Man who points out that even though he would not want to be hypocritical there is an obvious and glaring contradiction between what he is saying, on the one hand, and what he admits to doing, on the other. As he says, there are aspects - content - of his lifestyle which he finds difficult to justify given what are, otherwise, quite precise and clear-cut distinctions he makes between right and wrong, fair and just, caring and considerate, in one's relations with others:

- I would never make a politician in that I'm not a good liar ... That's a wee bit of a contradiction in itself, because I find it very, very difficult to tell lies except to cover for my philandering. Then I have to! (laughs) It's a necessity.

- But, by and large, I do have a problem with being untruthful ... Is that a contradiction? That it's not a problem telling females lies to cover for my other activities?

By way of this introduction, therefore, and referring again to Buckley's use of paradigmatic structures and metaphorical imagery in cultural analysis; it is evident that the term paradigm is used to refer to or describe - as in literary criticism - a root metaphor or fundamental image of the world from which models and particular illustrative metaphors are derived. Root metaphors - as of 'walls within walls' - comprise, in effect, sets of assumptions which are usually implicit about what sort of things make up the world, how they act, how they hang together and hence, by implication, how they can be known. To complement this root metaphor of 'walls within walls' described above, another generalised image or metaphor upon which particular descriptive images might be seen to hang is here described in light of members' quite fundamentalist interpretation of their Protestant religious tradition - an interpretation which provides a 'form', an organising schemata, for structuring knowledge and experience - as that of *word for word*.

Given this understanding, as suggested by Buckley, it is the root metaphor - that of *walls within walls* or a *word for word* worldview - that constitutes or implicitly contains within its 'form' rather than any specific 'content', the ultimate presuppositions or frame of reference for members' discourse about the world at large or any domain within it. As such, even though root metaphors are considered to be characteristically implicit or submerged they are, even so, considered comprehensive in scope in that they describe whole cultural worlds. Analytic models, in contrast, as used in quasi-scientific analysis or descriptions, are seen to merely describe the content of these, so-called, worlds. Hence the role of metaphor - both root and particular or illustrative metaphors - is that of an *interpretive* analytic tool in the context of descriptive knowledge of a community.

It is generally considered that root metaphors like those suggested above which operate as ordering schemata - the 'form' whereby experience is interpreted and made sense of - are more of a prerequisite to so-called rational thought than an end product or after thought. Hence, an ordering schemata - such as Buckley's image of *walls within walls* or that of a world structured *word for word* - might be viewed as somewhat of a prerequisite to members making sense of what they perceive or experience in the first place. However, in saying as much, is not to suggest that the actual *form* that ordering schemata adopt or the *content* that they address are likely to be similar from one cultural context to another for, indeed, there is every possibility that there will be much variation. Hence, the practical value of configurations such as root metaphors in cultural analysis is to be found, as Brown (1977) suggests, in their use as:

... a basis and instrument of interpretation, a framework of meaning within which *sensa* become facts, in which facts become concepts, and in which concepts become discourse. (Brown, 1977: 126)

In this view, therefore, a metaphorical image or root metaphor describing, for instance, a peculiarly Ulster Protestant or, more immediately, a Shankill worldview - in Buckley's terms, a *mentality* - provides both:

- a descriptive vocabulary for defining issues and problems which, for instance, relate to ways in which members respond - perhaps, defensively, negatively, or literally - to particular events and experiences and,
- an analytic tool for understanding or solving these issues or problems in so far as, once identified, the ordering schemata - the *walls within walls* or *word for word* format - provides a set of criteria according to which an object or person may, for instance, be judged as one of 'us' or one of 'them', as good or bad, right or wrong, as praiseworthy, shameless or guilty.

In much the same way, therefore, that a model might be used as an analytic tool, a yardstick, to compare and contrast instances of the particular, so root metaphors - although more literary than mathematical in style - are seen to provide a useful interpretive device for the comparison of articulated particular descriptions. These particular descriptions, so it is considered, might be compared in terms of an underlying set of organising principles, a 'form', determining - at some deeper and more implicit level - the way in which a way of life is fundamentally structured. So, although we might consider aspects of Shankill members' practice to be significantly different in 'content' to that of certain other working class Protestants it is, even so, considered possible that there is likely to be much similarity in the way - the 'form' - in which Shankill members organise or structure experience at some other, more implicit level.

As such, through an exploration of members' particular descriptions of a way of life, the intention is to illustrate a similarity of *form* - if not specific content - whereby Shankill members are seen to make sense - that is organise and structure - their experience which is, perhaps, characteristic of their Ulster Protestant heritage. This is a form which is usefully described poetically - rather than in any quasi-scientific terminology - as *word for word*; an image which implies a way of

organising experience which is both matter-of fact and literal, and which is not - of itself - considered to be a figurative or metaphorical understanding since it constitutes an exact and unimaginative rendering of experience.

A 'word for word' worldview: 'I think it's beautiful when you come here to Northern Ireland and hear the fizzle of everyone opening their Bible.'

Throughout the account of the Shankill Man he frequently acknowledges the importance he places upon a generalised 'concern for others':

- I only try to do good for people ...

- I do get the greatest satisfaction out of helping somebody ...

What this man describes as appropriate ways of behaving toward others derives directly from what he understands to be that common lot of cultural knowledge describing members' Christian – specifically, Protestant - religious tradition; their sense of *god-fearing* as it translates in the practice of everyday life. The Shankill Man, for instance, quite clearly points the way toward common ecumenical directives seen to provide clear and direct guidance on the right or correct way to conduct one self, to conduct specific relationships, and to conduct everyday activities which bring members in contact with any and, in principle, all others. Such, directives, as the Shankill Man illustrates, are clearly founded upon a common understanding of Christian ethics as these relate to matters of human character and conduct. And, in all, this constitutes a body of knowledge in which qualities of honesty, truthfulness, fidelity, the sanctity of life, modesty, charity, 'clean living' and the general precept of helping those less fortunate, are all highly valued. As he says:

- nothing gives me greater pleasure than helping somebody ...

- I certainly could never, ever, be part of anybody's life being taken ... I couldn't stand by and watch someone getting beat ...

- I wouldn't want to be hypocritical about it ... I wouldn't want to confess to be a Christian and do things that would be against the teachings of the Bible.

- I lead a relatively good life ... I don't drink ... I don't smoke ... I don't do anybody any harm ...

- I find it very difficult to tell lies ... I do have a problem with being untruthful.

What the Shankill Man is, in effect, describing is a social context of morality which is bounded, on all sides, by ethical directives commonly understood - by both churchgoers and non-churchgoers - to originate directly from sacred, Biblical sources. Hence, what is provided is an almost non-negotiable ordering schemata - a 'form' - whereby members might judge what is good or bad, fair or unjust, appropriate or inappropriate care and concern for others. And, it is this quite rigid and, for all intents, non-negotiable form which describes what it means for the Shankill Man to structure his social context of morality *word for word*; that is in a very matter-of fact and literal fashion whereby his understanding of, for example, what is considered *right* is, for all intents and purposes, an exact and unimaginative rendering of that which is to be found within the sacred scriptures. As he reiterates:

- he wouldn't want to do things which would be against the teachings of the Bible.

Hence, although he does not consider himself to be religious in the sense of regularly participating in rites and practices associated with the Protestant church he, nevertheless, describes himself as God-fearing since, for all practical purposes, he interprets and makes sense of events and experiences in his own life much in accordance with a shared understanding of what constitutes a peculiarly Ulster Protestant sense, or context, of morality:

- I'm not religious but I'm God-fearing ... As I say, I'm pretty much aware that I do believe there is a God ... I wouldn't want to die without accepting God as, what's it called, as a born-again Christian.

- I wouldn't want to confess to be a Christian and do things ... I wouldn't want to commit myself unless I could commit myself fully.

So it might be suggested, irrespective of obvious contradictions of 'content' between a way of life as it *ought* to be lived and as it is lived in practice - contradictions which the Shankill Man is clearly aware of - there is some evidence that when it comes to differentiating between what is generally considered right as

distinct from wrong or insidious behaviour, Shankill members adopt very similar guidelines - a form - to their, perhaps, less unorthodox Protestant neighbours. Indeed, there are very clear guidelines running throughout this articulated particular description which suggest what it is that members know of a way of life as it *ought* to be lived and, in view of which, how they know they will be judged by other Protestants and ultimately, so one assumes, by some higher authority.

In much the same way, therefore, that members might be described as organising aspects of experience in accordance with a root metaphor or image, as portrayed by Buckley, of *walls within walls* so they might, similarly, be described as organising aspects of their lives in accordance with a poetic image depicting a *word for word* worldview. That is a worldview much predicated upon a literal, matter-of-fact interpretation of experience which does not allow for much in the way of embellishment, creativity or imaginative speculation. As such, one might describe what it is to be *God-fearing* in this context of Shankill Protestants as that of a members' preference toward a literal and unimaginative - *word for word* - ordering of knowledge and experience which, in practice, allows them to say, with some certainty and precision, what 'is' and what 'is not', what is right and what is wrong, what is fair and unfair, what is just and unjust, quite irrespective - or so it appears - of what it is that they are seen to do in practice. In this view, members' self-descriptor, 'God-fearing' - indicative of all that is suggested by the poetic image or root metaphor of a *word for word* worldview - might be seen to comprise a whole set of implicit and much taken for granted assumptions about the sort of things which are seen to feature prominently in members' social context of morality, how these inter-relate and, by implication, how these might be known.

Shankill members' self-description as a God-fearing if not particularly religious or church-going community of people, therefore, might be interpreted as indicative of some thing other, or more, than simply being affeared of God for it is a

form of reference which clearly has a more this-worldly rather than other-worldly connotation. Hence, one might describe members' sense of God-fearing as implying, in itself, a particular way of conducting one's *self* and relations with others within a social context that, as Kitwood (1990) suggests, describes the culturally acceptable ways of expressing concern for others. As he comments:

... Morality involves a deep regard for the integrity of the other and therefore cannot be imposed by authority ... it is something that each person must be allowed to construct on his / her own ... (and) is not derived from textbooks or instruction, but from the lived, felt experience of relationship ... of care, support, respect, love, hatred, fear, rejection ... (Kitwood, 1990: 52)

Looking particularly to this notion of God-fearing - a notion indicative of a social context of morality which is structured *word for word* - an impression of a way of life is suggested in which an understanding of significant aspects or events in members' lives is achieved through a quite literal and unimaginative rendering of experience in accordance with what is known of a way of life as it *ought* to be lived. This literalism - a *word for word* rendering - constituting the form or ordering schemata determines how, from the outset, members will approach the mundane business of making sense of what they do. So to be God-fearing suggests, of itself, that members will adopt this *word for word*, exact and unimaginative worldview - or form - when it comes to interpreting and making sense of all that which suggests or involves their relations with and concern for others.

The most obvious example of this worldview is, clearly, to be found in a characteristically more matter-of fact than figurative or metaphorical interpretation of religious or sacred scriptures. There is much emphasis, for instance, throughout the various expressions of this religious tradition of Ulster Protestantism, placed upon the literal meaning of the Word. As Molly says:

- There's a man used to come over from Scotland, Alex Teel, and whenever he would come over he would say, 'Whenever they read out of the Bible, everybody here opens their Bible and reads it. Always keep up that habit. Never do away with that for I think it's beautiful when

you come here to Northern Ireland and you hear the fizzle of everybody opening their Bible.

When I go to England or Scotland nobody every reads their Bible.'

- Sometimes if the Pastor's reading he'd say, 'We'll have the Lord's Word now. Will everybody read? Will everybody join in the reading?' Then everybody will read, maybe, two verses. I very often do that.

The Lord's Word, irrespective of individual members' particular religious affiliations or practice, is essentially the source of Ulster Protestant members' knowledge appertaining to their social context of morality. And, indeed, their particular way of interpreting the Word - in being quite literal - is much in evidence in the context of their everyday talk of a sense of *duty* and *obligation* toward others, of their respect for certain personal qualities and ways of conducting oneself, of their admiration for certain sorts of people. And, it would not be unusual to hear members comment upon, and accord a degree of respect to, those who are - in their terms - considered not only to 'know their Bible' but to 'live it'.

So, although as a collectivity, members of the Shankill Road community could not be described as particularly church-going it would, nevertheless, be fair to describe them as - for the most part - a God-fearing rather than Godless people. That is a people who, given an historical predilection toward a quite fundamentalist interpretation of sacred scriptures, might appropriately be described as having adopted a somewhat rigid and dichotomous form - a *word for word* ordering schemata - whereby they are seen to categorise with a certain authority, exactness and simplicity that which is considered right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate in the context of their social relationships and concern for others. And, perhaps, it is the image presented by Molly of 'the fizzle of everybody opening their Bible' which best illustrates what it is - in this ethnographic context - to have a God-fearing rather than Godless approach to life since there is a real sense in which that fizzle is still clearly to be heard throughout the Shankill.

Falling church attendance and evidence of behaviours suggestive of a proclivity toward so-called 'sins of the flesh', therefore belies the relative importance still attributed to living a 'way of life' in this community in accordance with the Word. Indeed, what is striking amongst Shankill people is that, regardless of their own - as they often describe - weaknesses of both the 'spirit' and the 'flesh'; lack of church going, excessive drinking, smoking, sexual promiscuity, arguing, fighting, gambling, and proclivity toward certain illegal activities there is, even so, a common admiration and respect for those amongst them, one of *us*, who has been seen to triumph over the greatest adversity of all; that is the 'sins of the flesh'. The sheer frequency of members' anecdotes and stories relating to that select few amongst them who have, in effect, succeeded in crossing this boundary attest to and confirm this common and generalised members' perspective. As recounted, for instance, by the Shankill Man:

- We have had guys, some of the hardest guys that you would think you would ever meet, they've turned to the Lord.

- There would be people would be derisory about that, but I wouldn't be. I fully respect them for what they do.

And, similarly, in Molly's narrative which is littered with references to those like herself who have been *saved*, special attention is accorded to several Shankill members known to have radically changed their dissolute lifestyles:

- The Pastor, aye, he was a barman down in the Docker's Club ... Him and his father-in-law, apparently they used to buy wee houses, semi-condemned houses in the Shankill and they did them all up and sold them ... He said last night, 'I always went up and down the Shankill and thought I was no goat's toe!' You know you thought you were somebody! 'I got the quiff in my hair and walking up the Shankill looking in the windows to see did I look alright?'

- Well, Mrs McG. had met old friends ... they asked her got go to church this night with her ... and she got saved. The Pastor nearly did his nut!

- the one's in the church were praying for him ... one of them was in her house and left him a child's tract on the mantelpiece. And the Pastor was in drunk and the next morning he read that tract and realised it was for him. And, he gave his life to the Lord.

Stories of Shankill members' triumph, as it were, over a potentially Godless life style of drinking, womanising, violence and petty crime, feature regularly in members' conversations and are accorded a certain priority. And, it would be fair to say, that such stories are as much a part of members' everyday talk as those relating, as Feldman (1991) notes, to that somewhat inflated and exotic category of traditional hardmen. So, even though Shankill members on the whole do not consider - nor attempt to describe themselves - as a particularly religious people there is a much taken for granted appreciation that, perhaps, the greatest battle of all and one which far out-matches any contest of fists or weaponry is that which individuals - for this is a very individualistic Protestant orientation - wage against the temptations of the 'sins of the flesh'.

The relative importance which members do credit to this on-going and everyday battle is well illustrated throughout the Shankill Man's narrative in which he talks at length about what it means to him to be God-fearing and how he, in the practice of his life, attributes considerable importance to qualities of truthfulness, honesty and integrity, how he abhors and tries to prevent gratuitous violence, and how he expresses his concern for others in terms of his sense of responsibility and duty toward his family, paramilitary comrades and community. And, there is no doubt expressed as to what he, as a member of this Protestant community, expects in terms of his own conduct and what, in turn, he considers appropriate in his relationship with others. He also, on various occasions, talks at length about his friendship and respect for various Protestant clergy:

... I'm very good friends with Pastor J. McC. ... It was Billy Mc.I. who approached me and said that the Pastor would like to meet with me. I don't know whether he wanted to meet

with me or not but he said he would like to meet somebody from the Shankill who was involved in, you know, the organisations and stuff like that. ...

... There is occasions when he found it necessary to get in touch with me for different things. As a matter of fact a few of us went down there not so long ago and met him ... he would preach a wee bit of politics, on rare occasions, from the pulpit.

Of course, as the Shankill Man appreciates, it is one thing to 'talk' of the importance of certain ways of behaving toward others and quite another to be seen to practice what one preaches. And, it is somewhat evident from what members do say, that while being acutely aware of a way of life as it routinely *ought* to be lived they, nevertheless, experience some difficulty - a reluctance, for whatever reason - in putting 'what they know' - and what outsiders have a tendency to take for granted they *will* do - into practice. Hence, as the Shankill Man's account illustrates, he is well aware of what it is that he *ought* to do; this is quite clear-cut, never in doubt, and non-negotiable. But, as he readily acknowledges, knowing what he *ought* to do does not mean that this is what he either *will* or, indeed, has any intention of doing. Rather, he is quite forthright in acknowledging his moral shortfall - lapses in behaviour - in what might be described as his very direct and purposeful maintenance of the 'form' itself:

- I wouldn't like to die without accepting God as, what's it called, as a born-again Christian ... I wouldn't, maybe, want to take the chance.

- I wouldn't want to commit myself unless I could commit myself fully. I don't think that I'm just ready to do that yet ... there's aspects of my life that I don't know that I could change!

So, although Shankill members are often seen - in the context of 'what they do' rather than may 'say they do' - to contradict what they know of a way of life as it *ought* to be lived they, nevertheless, continue to evaluate experience much in accordance with a characteristically Ulster Protestant 'form'. This is a form - or interpretive procedure - which is both largely implicit and much taken for granted and

only ever really made manifest in members' seemingly black-white, exact and unimaginative rendering of experience. That is a rendering of experience that, for the most part, affords them an appearance of some rigidity and dogmatism in their thinking if not always in what they are seen to do.

In this respect, it might be considered that this implicit *word for word* worldview is somewhat visible as it filters through different aspects of members' lives; through, for example, their quite literal interpretation of sacred scriptures, through their pronouncements on what constitutes good or bad character in a person, on what is considered fair or unfair, just or unjust and, of course, on who is one of 'us' and who is one of 'them'. For the most part, it seems members appear content to quite rigidly carve-up their experience of the world into these seemingly air tight categories, a form or structure which in its' application enables them to pronounce with some certitude on whether a thing 'is' or 'is not', whether it is right or it is wrong. However, in being seen to pronounce with some certitude on what is right or appropriate does not mean that members, as stated previously, are necessarily seen to practice a way of life as they know it *ought* to be lived. For, as the Shankill Man illustrates:

- I wouldn't want to confess to be a Christian and do things that would be against the teachings of the Bible. I've thought long and hard about that and I wouldn't want to commit myself unless I could commit myself fully.

- I don't think that I'm just ready to do that yet ... there's aspects of my life that I don't know that I could change.

In the context of members' everyday talk, this *word for word* worldview is, perhaps, most evident in a relative lack of any particular or generalised sense of ambivalence - of opposing attitudes - as to what 'is' or what 'is not', what is right or wrong, pervading routine conversations. And, although the Shankill Man, for instance, is heard to question himself as to certain of his motives as he clearly

suggests, at the end of the day he does not doubt the fundamental precepts upon which his basic understanding of the meaning of life, of morality, of what it is to be God fearing, is founded. Indeed, there is remarkably little evidence throughout such members' stories of what might be described as *shades of grey* in their interpretation of experience. For, as stated above, a thing either is or it is not and, therefore, what one does is either right or is wrong and, by definition, there is no third option whereby one might be seen to, perhaps, have it both ways or negotiate a position between these seemingly opposing camps. Such an option – the shades of grey - simply does not feature within this *word for word* worldview in terms of which members are seen to render their experience meaningful.

As aptly described by Jackie Redpath (1992), this *word for word* worldview is essentially one in which there is little, if any, room for any 'maybe's, if's or but's'. It is a worldview implicitly founded upon exactitude, facticity and a one-to-one correspondence between what members 'know' of a way of life as it *ought* to be lived and what they are, then, seen to do in practice. If the two – the *ought* and the *is* of their experience - do not correspond in 'content' members, as a rule, do not attempt to negotiate this situation to seek some middle ground. Rather, a lack of correspondence of content does not, in itself, appear to be reason enough to fundamentally question the way - the *word for word* form - in which experience is categorised, structured and rendered meaningful in the first place. In other words, there is a general acceptance of the 'form' even when much of the 'content' appears contradictory. Hence, it might be said that it is the 'form' not the 'content' which, so to speak, is sacrosanct since it enables members - even when what they do is seen to be highly contentious and contradictory - to at least pronounce with some certitude upon what *ought* to be right and wrong within their social context of morality. As Redpath says:

... It is a tradition which is a very important strand in the Protestant community. Things were either right or wrong, there were no shades of grey ...
(Redpath, 1992: 24)

Moral Responsibility: 'I find it very, very difficult to tell lies ... but ...'

Members' seemingly rigid structuring of their social context of morality into largely black-white categories whereby a thing either 'is' or 'is not', is right or is wrong, is considered to go hand-in-hand - as suggested by Kohlberg (1971, 1982), Brandt (1986), Gilligan (1982, 91) - with a tendency for individuals to distance themselves from any real sense of personal responsibility for their actions. This form of largely dichotomous - no maybe's, if's or buts - thinking, as is suggested in the literature, reflects a stage or level of moral development which is characteristic of a particular conceptual understanding of the moral worth of human life as expressed in members' evident concern for others. As explained by Kohlberg (1971), there are distinctive commonalities in the ways in which people, irrespective of cultural context, differentiate between what is generally considered morally right and wrong:

... The increasingly prescriptive nature of more mature moral judgements is reflected in the series of differentiations we have described, which is a series of differentiations of 'Is' and 'Ought' (or of morality as internal principles from external events and expectations)

... this series of differentiations of the morally autonomous or categorical 'ought' from the morally heteronomous 'Is' also represents a differentiation of the moral from the general sphere of value judgements. (Kohlberg, 1971: 127-35)

In order to appreciate an individual's sense of moral responsibility, as Kohlberg (1971) indicates and as reiterated in the later work of Kekes (1992), there is a need to understand the ways in which they routinely distinguish between moral and non-moral values; between, for instance, what Shankill members would describe as:

- a God-fearing way of life in which 'concern for others' takes priority, and
- a God-less life in which concern is essentially self-oriented and self-interested.

Here, the distinction between moral and non-moral values is primarily drawn in terms of members' care and concern for others. Hence, non-moral values are those which, clearly, concern benefits secured or harms avoided primarily by members for, or on behalf of, themselves. Such values indicate a self-oriented / self-interested perspective and involve, for the most part, what are seen to be personal projects or interests. In contrast, moral values concern benefits and harms which agents cause others and, indeed, any activities

which necessarily involve others are seen to constitute that sphere of behaviours which are involve a moral - or *ought* – component or obligation.

As illustrated in the account of the Shankill Man, non-moral values are, on occasion, seen to directly clash with moral values and members act in what appears to be a self-interested fashion even when articulating a highly moral stance on some broader issue. So, even though *ought* factors - that is common moral values of truthfulness, honesty, charity, non-violence - are considered important guidelines for behaviour there are often certain quite consequential non-moral values - those indicating personal preferences or indulgences, projects or interests – that members might be committed to which, in practice, limit their commitment to an otherwise highly principled, moral course of action.

Through an appreciation of members' self-stories it is possible to gauge how they, often quite variously, juggle their commitment to a moral course of action, and when and why this commitment is seen to wane. Clearly, as illustrated in the narrative of the Shankill Man, there are critical junctures when he appears as if forced to choose between a morally responsible course of action - one involving truthfulness or non-violence - and one known to be primarily beneficial to himself. Such junctures, in effect, describe the critical point for analysis of what might be referred to as members' generalised sense of moral responsibility; that is their concern for the *harm* they are likely to cause others if they choose to pursue a particular course of action.

Members, as Kitwood (1990) notes, differ considerably in the ways in which they express this so-called 'concern for others', that is their particular sense of moral responsibility for what it is that they 'do':

... Many societies have existed, so anthropologists seem to indicate, without ever developing systematic doctrines or theories that we would easily identify as moral. ... Concern for others is expressed in forms of practice and, if expressed verbally, largely through myth and fable.

... But when theories are created, the proponents have no option but to draw on the available resources of the culture, its familiar metaphors and preoccupation; at least these provide a starting point, even if they are modified in use. (Kitwood, 1990: 5-11)

In contemporary society a special moral category has been created such that whatever now falls within members' social context of morality - their concern for others - is no longer simply expressed through myth and fable or, indeed, through religious discourse. Rather, the moral category of knowledge is now well established and articulated by way of an immensely elaborate discourse which, as clearly evident in the Shankill Man's account, tends to set apart moral knowledge from other categories of knowledge. Once set apart, such knowledge is often - not simply amongst these Ulster Protestants - seen to go largely unchallenged and uncontested. And, as illustrated here, members might not always be seen to practice what is known to constitute the 'content' of this category of moral knowledge yet, even so, this 'content' is rarely fundamentally questioned.

Once set apart from other categories of knowledge there is always the danger that this moral category of knowledge will be, in a sense, reified. Hence, any distinctions which are made between, for instance, what constitutes good or bad, right or wrong, fair or unfair, just or unjust behaviour might well become rigidly entrenched in members' cultural expressions. Indeed, this reification of certain sorts of knowledge - as Kitwood(1990) considers - leads to a real difficulty in linking what is known as the moral *ought* - the rightness of certain behaviours - with actual, real or genuine concern for others; that is a real or genuine sense of moral responsibility for what it is that one does which is liable to cause harm to another. This is a problem which, as he considers, basically stems from the way in which the term - the moral *ought* - is routinely used in everyday life:

... Whatever may be said at the purely theoretical level, the moral ought in practice tends to obliterate the unique personhood of both the agent and those who might be the objects of concern. (Kitwood, 1990:15)

In this view, the moral *ought* - a term clearly evident in Shankill members' everyday 'moral' discourse - is considered to be highly questionable as a motivator toward

actual or real concern for others or, in other words, provide a real and workable sense of moral responsibility. It is a concept that is seen to be fundamentally based upon a totally unrealistic conception of the person. That is a conception that is predominant, one might also argue, in much of Protestant religious thought:

... The person implicitly conceptualised in much of liberal moral theory is masculine and bourgeois, straightforward, unimaginative, without greater inner anxiety or conflict, with passions easily tamed, and social only in an attenuated sense, scarcely a 'biological' being ... a rational being ... (Kitwood, 1990: 49-50)

What is clearly being suggested, is that this tendency to focus upon the nature of the person within this social context of morality as an inherently *rational* being - as essentially masculine, bourgeois, unimaginative, and so forth - fails to take note of people as *sentient* beings. Hence, in this view not only is it a problem for researchers to gauge the full dimension of the social context of morality underlying members' experience but - given a members' worldview which is itself essentially structured in accordance with such precepts - it is equally problematic for members to gauge the extent, for instance, of their personal moral responsibility for actions. As such, gaining an appreciation of what in practice describes members' social context of morality - that is their generalised 'concern for others' or sense of moral responsibility - is much dependent upon gaining an understanding of how they, as individuals, construct their sense of *self*hood as, for instance, either essentially rational or, perhaps, more sentient beings. For, as Kitwood (1990) suggests, members' construction of *self*hood will reflect directly upon the way in which they then express concern for others.

In terms of western philosophy, of the several competing images of *self*hood the most predominant, by far, comprises that of a rational, cognitive actor much reminiscent - in the sense of being much devoid of excessive passion, feelings, emotions - of qualities of personhood admired by Shankill members as described earlier. So, what has essentially been peripheralised if not ostracised, not only in traditional philosophical thought but also, one might argue, in the social context of a

Shankill sense of morality is any real sense of the person as somewhat less, or other, than a rational, inherently unified, being. That is a sense of the person as a sentient being capable of unpredictable, perhaps imaginative, creative, and emotive renderings of experience.

The social construction of morality - that is the social context describing members 'concern for others' - which tends to be found in western philosophical thought, as Gilligan (1982, 91) suggests, is seen to be paralleled by what she describes as the social construction of masculinity. Hence, the essence of morality is considered to be both rational and objective, and moral judgements are generally considered to be those in which feelings, emotions, and intuition play no part. Given this understanding it is largely considered - and as would be born out, for instance, in an exposition of much of Ulster Protestant religious discourse - that men are, for all practical purposes, morally superior to women. Indeed, as much that has been suggested so far indicates, there is a tendency to focus almost exclusively on aspects of justice, fairness, rights and autonomy, in critical analyses of moral development or moral responsibility. These are qualities which, for the most part, reflect members' rational being or sense of self-hood and are mostly closely identified - in much social thought - with essentially masculine characteristics. The outcome of this bias is that there is relatively little attention paid to seeking other dimensions of social experience illustrative of actual concern - compassion, sympathy or care - exhibited by members in their relations with others which would be more indicative of members' sentient self; that aspect of self so closely - in much social theory - identified with feminine characteristics or with women in their traditional caring role.

When taking into consideration this more rounded view of the *self*, or selfhood, as Gilligan in particular suggests, one might identify a progression through stages of moral development whereby members gain a sense of moral responsibility - concern for others - characterised more by a notion of 'goodness' in relation to

activities than notions of justice, fairness, rights or autonomy. Such a notion of *goodness* in relation to others is clearly illustrated in Molly's account when she talks of both herself and, for the most part, other Shankill women. She clearly links this notion of *goodness* to that of self-sacrifice and the gaining of approval from others; to those qualities evident in 'long suffering wee wives', of forbearance, self sacrifice and endurance.

What is largely considered to be a self-sacrificing and approval seeking stage of moral development is, in the literature, described as a largely elementary and less than fully developed or articulated sense of moral responsibility. It is only, indeed, when members are seen to progress through this self-sacrificing stage, when they also start to see themselves as within the generalised domain of care, that we might talk of them as having a fully developed sense of moral responsibility described, in the early literature by Kohlberg (1971), as stage of Principled Morality. For Gilligan, such Principled Morality is attained when members' intention to be *good* is matched by an intention to be 'honest' and 'real' toward their self. Hence, the notion of care or concern for others, in her view, ultimately needs to be understood as an obligation to realise a fully developed moral sense of responsibility in all relations with others.

Ultimately, therefore, 'concern for others', as described here, implicitly involves a commitment to an ethic of care and non-violence which is accepted and acted in accordance with, not out of compulsion but out of a sense of *connectedness* - a term used by Bott (1986) in her discussion of members' family and neighbourhood relations - with other sentient beings. It is members' sense of *connectedness* with others which is highly influential in determining the, so-called, level of their moral awareness and responsibility and, indeed, the way in which this awareness is put into practice in the context of their experience. Hence, the connectedness of the social context within which members spend their formative years is seen to have a

considerable effect upon their later moral awareness for, as Tapp and Kohlberg (1971)

note:

... Fitting experiences, guidance, and / or explanations by elders can accelerate the growth of moral outlooks and ethical legal perspectives. This is the hidden curriculum of socialisation - be it political, moral, or legal. (Tapp and Kohlberg, 1971: 87)

So, given the context of Shankill members' lives and as illustrated throughout the account of the Shankill Man, it is somewhat apparent that there is often a somewhat dubious connection existing between:

- an individual's ability to effect moral judgement in a situation; as illustrated here in terms of members appearing to have little difficulty in articulating what 'is' and 'is not', what is 'right' and what is 'wrong', and,
- what is seen to describe moral *action* - in Gilligan's terms, real or genuine care or concern for others - in the context of their experience, the 'what they do' rather than simply 'say they do', of a way of life.

It is clear in this ethnographic context, for instance, that there is often a quite arbitrary relationship between what members judge to be right, that is their ability to effect moral judgement and operationalise the 'form', and what they are then seen to do in practice. And, this inconsistency tends to be dealt with in terms of an assumed human 'weakness of will' as evidenced in the Shankill Man's quite human predilection toward the *sins of the flesh*; his philandering. In other words, a situation is described in which it is possible to know what is right or good and yet fail to do it because of a 'weakness of will'.

Of some interest given this apparent situation, is that particularly at lower levels of moral development - as suggested in the literature - which are largely identified with social environments predicated upon an ethos of instrumentality there is often considerable *difference* in what an individual may judge to be morally correct and what they may, then, be seen to do in the context of their activities. Only as members are seen to progress to higher, more principled levels of moral development,

does moral judgement and action tend to converge and there is less immediate evidence of inconsistencies in what, on the one hand, members judge to be right and, on the other, what their actions indicate. As Bee's (1989) study suggests, where one might identify a strongly utilitarian ethos it is usual that members generally fail to develop truly empathetic responses, that is a fully developed sense of, one might argue and as described above, their *self*hood. Hence, they are perhaps less able to appreciate the perspective of *all* others and, as a consequence, less able to articulate or express - given Gilligan's terminology - a genuine, real or actual concern for all others.

Boundaries of moral inclusion and exclusion: 'Then, she says one day, 'You know, it's one of them!' ... Like whispered it to me.'

Much of the literature describing parameters of members' concern for others - the boundaries of moral inclusion and exclusion - focuses upon members' responses to particular crises and the ways in which boundaries of concern appear to expand and contract in extreme situations. In contrast, Opatow (1990) concentrates on the issue of *harm doing* in a description of moral exclusion and illustrates how *harm* emerges, gains momentum and is often justified by social institutions. As she comments:

... Moral exclusion occurs when individuals or groups are perceived as outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply. Those who are morally excluded are perceived as nonentities, expendable, or undeserving. Consequently, harming or exploiting them appears to be appropriate, acceptable or just.

... Empirical research on moral exclusion is needed to pinpoint its causes, to predict its progression, and to effect change in social issues that involve the removal of victims from our moral communities. (Opatow, 1990: 1-20)

In this view, both moral inclusion and exclusion are considered to be continuous variables that, on occasion, are conditional in the sense that not all individuals who have membership rights within a moral community will, at all times or in all situations, be included within that moral community. Hence, boundaries of moral inclusion or exclusion are often seen to be unstable or provisional especially, it is noted, when there is any persistent conflict within a particular social context. In such circumstances, boundaries of moral inclusion and exclusion often shift quite erratically and members are seen to express a certain confusion in statements relating

to their concern for others well-being, in their considerations of issues of fairness, and in their general consistency of moral judgements. The relative stability of one's moral community, as Opatow also notes, is also largely effected by members' feelings of *connectedness* in their social relationships; a notion that has been previously addressed in the context of Shankill members personal relations.

When talking of members' sense of *moral inclusion*, therefore, this is a term which generally implies notions of connectedness, considerations of fairness, a willingness to share resources, and so forth, as evidenced in members relations with others. And, in contrast, as described by Opatow and Staub (1990) forms of *moral exclusion* are seen to share a somewhat different set of fundamental characteristics:

... Outwardly, severe and mild forms of moral exclusion are different, but they share vital underlying characteristics. In both, the perpetrators perceive others as psychologically distant, lack constructive moral obligations toward others, view others as expendable and undeserving, and deny other's rights, dignity, and autonomy.
(Opatow, 1990: 2)

This distinction between inclusion within, or exclusion without, a particular moral community is indicative of the pattern of social relationships which members inevitably construct with others; a pattern which describes, for instance, 'who' they choose to include within their scope of justice, their range of fairness, their generalised concern or care and who, in principle if not always in practice, are excluded. Of course, as is evident amongst members of the Shankill who clearly might be said to share common concerns and traditions, members often construct quite individual and idiosyncratic boundaries of local justice or fairness, of care and concern. And, indeed, there is likely to be considerable variance in the ways in which Shankill members choose, for example, to morally exclude some and not others from one or several spheres of their lives.

Quite typically, for instance, Shankill members are seen to express strong moral obligations toward certain family members, close friends – from childhood, from school days - and particular neighbours. Yet, there is no sense that this feeling of moral obligation is inclusive of *all* those who might be described as family, *all* those

who might be described as neighbours, or *all* those they might describe as friends. It is, also, somewhat evident that boundaries of moral inclusion which they describe periodically shift as circumstances change and different events arise. As such, boundaries of moral inclusion and exclusion are found to be quite fluid within the context of everyday Shankill life and, as one might expect, they only tend to become more critically defined as crises and conflict of one sort or another erupt or become personally critical. In fact, as is generally considered in the literature, the mere existence of danger, stress or conflict tends to reinforce group boundaries in such a way that what is described as 'local justice' – members' sense of fairness in their dealings and concern for others - is perceived and administered quite differently to normal.

In general, situations in which conflict is on-going are seen to be accompanied by a proportionate shrinking of members' scope of local justice, their realm of fairness or concern for others; that is the parameters of what might be described as their 'moral community' contract. And, in view of Shankill members' lives over the previous three decades, it might be suggested that - in practice - this has resulted in more rather than less 'others' being defined as beyond, or excluded from, what any one individual would describe as their moral community; that is, outside their particular range of moral responsibility or beyond their particular scope of generalised care or concern. This tendency toward more rather than less in the way of moral exclusion emerges, as Opatow (1990) suggests, much because of a fundamental, perhaps innate, tendency for members to differentiate between objects which they perceive as *unconnected* but not, necessarily, as dissimilar to themselves. Hence:

... Perceiving another as unconnected to oneself can trigger negative attitudes, destructive competition, discriminatory responses, and aggressive, destructive behaviour - attitudes and behaviours consistent with moral exclusion. Conversely perceiving another as connected to oneself in any way can hinder moral exclusion. (Opatow, 1990: 7)

The argument, therefore, is not that similarity - of lifestyle, history, or traditions - in itself, inevitably fosters inclusion since, when conflict does occur, similarity is seen to

exacerbate rather than alleviate the situation. Rather, what fosters inclusion, as previously commented, is members' sense of *connectedness* to others which, in turn enhances their general sense of moral responsibility and obligation.

Communities such as the Shankill which have experienced a long history of turmoil and conflict, as described by Bandura (1990) are often characterised by much in the way of selective disengagement of moral responsibility and control by members. Indeed, in such social contexts, members are often seen to experience considerable personal conflict - as is, in part, illustrated in both the accounts of the Shankill Man and Molly - as to what they should or *ought* to do when behaviour they may personally de-value is, nevertheless, seen to serve as the means for securing valued benefits. In such circumstances, they have the choice of acting in what might be described as a pragmatic and utilitarian fashion or of fulfilling what they know to be their moral duty or obligation. And, as is only too apparent within the context of Shankill life, when there are strong external inducements - be these social or political pressures, extraneous rewards or the prospect of heavy sanctions or punishment - members are quite likely to selectively disengage moral considerations in their choice of which course of action to follow. As Molly indicated from her own experience of Shankill life, moral considerations are, it seems, quite routinely put to one side when it comes to benefiting, 'for talk sake', from the 'queer good wee bargains' to be had up the Shankill Road, considerations of sexual propriety or, indeed, the sometimes harsh administration of local justice.

So, not only are Shankill members seen to put aside moral considerations when, perhaps, seeking some immediate economic benefit which, in itself, does not directly harm others they also, on occasion, are seen to engage in activities which, clearly, have direct and immediately detrimental and harmful effects on others. As illustrated by the Shankill Man, what is often considered culpable - for instance, punishment beatings - if performed by others, or at any other time, or in another set of

circumstances, are often construed as 'right' by members such as himself who endeavour to explain such activities, given the circumstances within which members find themselves, as founded upon a moral imperative. As he illustrates, there is a tendency to shift the boundaries of the moral community - of inclusion and exclusion and, as such, members' scope of justice or fairness - to, in practice, allow certain types of violent or illegal activities to become morally defensible. Indeed, on occasion members go to extraordinary lengths to defend certain sorts of morally suspect activities and, thereby, attempt to incorporate them within boundaries describing their moral community. As a consequence, as Sanford and Comstock (1971), for instance, suggest in the context of violence:

... The conversion of socialised people into dedicated fighters is achieved not by altering their personality structures, aggressive drives, or moral standards. Rather, it is accomplished by cognitively restructuring the moral value of killing, so that it can be done free from self-censuring restraints. (Sanford & Comstock, 1971: 29)

Such a view is corroborated by Bandura (1990) who comments:

... it requires conducive social conditions, rather than monstrous people, to produce heinous deeds. Given appropriate social conditions, decent, ordinary people can be led to do extraordinarily cruel things.

... Analyses of moral disengagement mechanisms usually draw heavily on examples from military and political violence. This tends to convey the impression that selective disengagement of self-sanctions occurs only under extra-ordinary circumstances. The truth is quite the contrary. Such mechanisms operate in everyday situations in which decent people routinely perform activities having injurious human effects, to further their own interests or for profit. (Bandura, 1990: 27, 46)

People will often, as is suggested in the literature, behave in ways they normally repudiate if, as Sanford et al above suggest, a legitimate authority is seen to accept responsibility for the consequences of their behaviour. They will participate in all manner of activities they deplore in others if they are not considered directly responsible for the consequences of those activities; that is, if they are given the opportunity to selectively disengage from a sense of personal responsibility for what it is that they 'do'.

In view of this notion of moral disengagement, one might seek an explanation as to why so many Shankill members have readily joined paramilitary groupings within the community and been prepared - as has the Shankill Man, for a considerable

number of years - to both directly and indirectly participate in a variety of violent activities which, as he confirms, most members would normally shun:

- I couldn't stand by and watch somebody getting beat ... And, yes, I could have finished in jail and I would, certainly, never have saw the inside of a prison.

- Most of the prisoners, OK, so there's some bad, bad boys ... but in Northern Ireland I think was the lowest crime rate ... So, I mean that says something ...

Participation in such activities as those associated with paramilitarism in the community are commonly understood - described and talked about - as authorised by a higher, more impersonal, military-style authority which allows members such as the Shankill Man - himself an active representative of this command - to, in practice, morally disengage from the consequences, the *harm* inflicted on others, of their individual activities. In other words, although the Shankill Man readily adopts a stand of principled morality in the context of his public 'talk' and asserts a blanket abhorrence of violence there is, nevertheless, much which he suggests and indicates which is indicative of a routine displacement of responsibility for violent actions of individuals known to be active paramilitary members. And, indeed, it might be argued that personal displacement of moral responsibility - not simply by paramilitary members but others within the community who 'know' of such activities - is now so routine a way of 'talking' about certain types of activities that this *displacement*, of itself, constitutes a routine *procedure* in the context of members' public articulation of a way of life. In other words, displacement or distancing of personal responsibility is commonplace and expected of oneself and others within the context of descriptions of this way of life.

As is well documented, the displacement of moral responsibility is seen to weaken individual members' restraints over their potentially detrimental actions. It, also, is seen to qualitatively diminish members' care and concern for the wellbeing of those who are known, for instance, to be mistreated by others. And, although only making a tentative connection, it might be noted that - as stated in the Introduction

(Pearce, 1994) - Ulster Protestants are often criticised for being preoccupied with their own problems and for showing little concern for the problems of others in similar situations. A number of social factors are generally considered necessary to ease the way toward this surrendering of a sense of personal responsibility for activities, of which the most significant hinges upon the legitimation accorded to particular authorities within a community and the relative *closeness* of these authorities to members' everyday life. This social closeness, that is an everyday presence of paramilitaries, for example, within one's community is considered sufficient to ensure members' willingness to engage in activities which, in any other circumstances at any other time, they would consider reprehensible.

It is much the case that in the Shankill Road community, a Belfast community which has a long history of paramilitary involvement, most if not all families have connections of one sort or another with paramilitary organisations. Hence, the reality is that - irrespective of official ceasefires - these organisations continue to maintain a close and influential presence - *closeness* - in the context of members' everyday lives. Indeed, the very existence of paramilitary headquarters within the Shankill has been a significant factor contributing to the easing of members' sense of personal responsibility for all manner of illegal and potentially violent and harm-inflicting activities associated with both the Troubles and, indeed, with living in a socially and economically deprived and decaying environment.

Of course, although we might choose to only associate such displacement of responsibility, as suggested above, with certain sorts of activities - those, for instance, known to be associated with certain local 'authorities' - it is still evident that there will be a knock-on effect, as such, into other spheres of members' everyday social life; their domestic lives, their work, their leisure pursuits. In saying as much, however, is not to suggest that Shankill people routinely act as if simply obedient functionaries of these local 'authorities', that they entirely cast off any sense of

responsibility for what they individually do. Indeed, there are a small number of vociferous members who are highly critical of such local authorities and many other members who choose to 'keep a low profile'. However, it would be fair to say that whatever noble qualities members possess, or sentiments they express, are generally much subsumed - clouded - within a social context dominated and now much described by years of enduring social and economic deprivation writ large by conflict; that is by social conditions known to lead an otherwise 'moral' people to engage in all manner of harm-doing activities as described by Deutsch (1990):

... Unfortunately, many people are raised under conditions that are not conducive to integrated perspectives of self and others. Their harsh circumstances, authoritarian family, or ethnocentric culture, predispose them to continue the active splitting between the good and bad. The consequence is that they idealise those individuals, groups, places, institutions, and values with which they identify, and they denigrate those with whom they (or their group) are in conflict or potential conflict. ...

... The splitting ... leads to strong boundaries between the 'we' and the 'they'. Under such circumstances it is easy for the 'we' group to exclude the 'they' from their moral community - to perceive the 'they' as not entitled to the moral and justice considerations to which the other members of one's community are entitled. Excluding the 'they' from one's moral community permits one to consider oneself as a moral person even while one engages in what would normally be considered depraved actions. (Deutsch, 1990: 21-25)

Molly's Version: 'How do they carry out these acts? Do they never realise they're going to have to answer for this!'

THEN THE VIOLENCE AND ALL now is terrible! The way they're beating up old ladies. Like, that's not natural. That wouldn't haven't happened forty years ago, sure it wouldn't. I really think the devil has got into the people, I really do. I think he's got a strong hold and he's getting stronger and stronger. You see years ago people were all God-fearing. All the people were God-fearing! Aye, Ruby said that too, 'I'm not a church goer but I'm very God-fearing!' You look at people at that age they were really affeared.

I was in a house one night and they were talking about some murder, something that happened, and the man said, 'I wonder do the people never stop to think they've got to meet their maker! Do they never stop to think that? How do they carry out these acts? Do they never realise they're going to have to answer for this?'

Like, really, years gone by you'd have stopped! You would have thought, 'Oh, God knows!' Isn't that right? Like, when you know that, really, you were frightened to do the things. Now? Brazenness!

I T USED TO BE EVERYBODY honoured their parents. The Pastor says about the young ones, you know the thugs, 'Well I'm sure young ones now, sure they've no respect! In my day we used to play ball, you know, on the street but if a minister, a nun, a priest, anybody, went up passed, a Christian Brother, whatever, we stopped playing till they passed.' Now they've no respect for anybody.

Sure, look at the language alone going up the streets now! It used to be if a fellow had of said 'f' in my company, 'Oh sorry!' Like it would have been terrible if they said bad words. But sure now they say it out in the streets. They don't care who hears them. They've no respect now for anybody!

But whether they went to church, or not, people wouldn't have said that. They wouldn't have offended anybody! And you wouldn't have offended a man of the cloth. We used to go ask them, 'Could we carry their messages up!' cos' we believed that's what we ought to do. Taught you that in the Brownies and the Guides, to carry the shopping for older people. Well, you didn't get paid for it, you know, you just took them up.

And, you wouldn't have dared answer your mother back. You wouldn't dare! I wouldn't have dared answer an adult back. I never answered back till she was dead!

I wouldn't answer a boss back. Respect. You were always taught a fair day's work and if you wanted your pay you had to do your work for it. You know there was no such thing as slouching off. Now, sure in that shipyard, they used to clock in, whatever they do, and some of them are away doing other jobs and they think it's funny and smart. I think it's terrible!

I STICK TO THE CHURCH NOW. I started to go to the wee Elim church about ten years ago. I says, 'I'll slip into that church because nobody knows me there. Like nobody will ask you anything.' I was only in there and I was telling them, you know. Everybody knew! I went in and, then, I wasn't that long in till it all came out! Margaret M. had said about

her husband had been in Long Kesh and then I says, 'My son's in it!' And here, Billy was in with her husband!

Then Mrs McG. says, 'Oh, Kate's son was in. Oh aye, Kate's son's done life. But he's just got out. He's a Pastor now.' Kate nor I would ever say what did he do or how did he do it. I would never ask. But somebody had told me it was whoever shot the father that Kate's son went out to shoot him. But Kate said she just couldn't believe it. Such a young boy, he wasn't seventeen! That's the son in the Kesh who's now the Pastor and, then, the older brother, Robert, who's so bitter, he lives down here, you know, where the Leisure Centre is. My Billy had great respect for him, always told me, 'One of our boys in the Kesh is away to be a Pastor!'

I suppose knowing somebody else in the same boat, they didn't shrug you to the side or anything. They were with me. And, they really do care about each other. I used to say it was like a club because when we went up to that wee church we had a marvellous time up there.

Now that was what Billy couldn't get over. He used to say, 'These so-called Christians!' But, you see, whenever Billy took ill he got so many cards from them, you know, 'Get well' cards. He was spell bound! All these cards coming in! Then he got one he says, 'See this card? She doesn't just say her name or I hope you get well, she's filled every wee space on the card.' He couldn't get over it.

BUT, YOU KNOW, THE TRADITIONAL churches are falling away, yet these churches are growing and getting bigger. I would say in the whole of Northern Ireland these sort of churches are growing when the other ones are waning away. There's about eighty to a hundred come to our church but I wouldn't call that big. Elim! It means Pentecostal, the pastor told us that one night. It's from the Bible. Pentecostal is 'Freedom of Spirit' for I asked him. He said, 'You're free for the Holy Spirit.' I suppose it's relatively new but they are growing. Like, there's Mrs McC. been saved 64 years!

There's a man used to come over from Scotland, Alex Teel, and whenever he would come over he would say, 'Whenever they read out of the Bible, everybody here opens their Bible and reads it. Always keep up that habit. Never do away with that for I think it's beautiful when you come here to Northern Ireland and you hear the fistle of everybody opening their Bible.'

When I go to England or Scotland nobody every reads their Bible.' Sometimes if the Pastors reading he'd say, 'We'll have the Lord's word now. Will everybody read? Will everybody join in the reading?' Then everybody will read, maybe, two verses. I very often do that. I'm no good getting up and praying or anything but I would do that; I'd read the Bible.

THE PASTOR, AYE, HE WAS A BARMAN down in the Docker's Club. He'd worked in the Shipyard, like, but he worked as a barman in his spare time. Him and his father-in-law, apparently they used to buy wee houses, semi-condemned houses in the Shankill and they did them all up and sold them. Made a wee bit of money like that.

He said last night, 'I always went up and down the Shankill and thought I was no goat's toe!' You know you thought you were somebody! 'I got the quiff in my hair and walking up the Shankill looking in the windows to see did I look alright?'

Well, Mrs McG. had met old friends from years ago and they asked her to go to church this night with her. She went to an Elim church and she got saved. The Pastor nearly did his nut! He said, 'I went up to my father-in-law and said, "Sammy my marriage is over. That's it, over now. She's away to this church and she's left me. That's her and I split. She wants this church and she doesn't want me now!"'

And the one's in the church were praying for him now. And, one of them was in her house and left him a child's tract on the mantelpiece. And the pastor was in drunk and the next morning he read that tract and realised it was for him. And, he gave his life to the Lord. They sold their house and he went to the Bible College. Mrs McG. had to go with her three children down to his mother's. And she stayed in the Shankill and he went for three years to the Bible College.

Now, the Pastor would say, 'Don't look at me, 'Tommy McG., or you'll surely get a fall. You'll get knocked down. Keep looking up. Look to the Lord. We're all only human, we're only man, and we'll let you down.' He believes everybody is equal. he believes he's the shepherd, 'It's my duty to look after youse. I'm not any better than you. I'm placed here to shepherd you. To see that you get fed on the Word of the Lord.'

OUR KATHY THAT COMES IN, she was a Catholic. The Pastor, he has no objection to Catholics. If you were Catholic you'd come along to him and he'd welcome you in. Kathy's daughter changed back her religion to be a Catholic. Married a Catholic fellow.

Well, everyone knew that Kathy's daughter was getting married and everybody collected and bought her a big crystal bowl. But, Julie thought she'd be ousted out of the church, that they wouldn't want her again. She couldn't believe it when they sent her a big crystal bowl and Mrs McG. and Jeanette and Anne S. and Margaret M., all went to see the wedding. Went down to the Chapel away down and wished Julie all the best, wished her happiness. So they're not bitter. They're not bitter like that.

BUT, REALLY, IF YOU WERE IN anywhere and you saw a stranger coming in they'd say, 'Hello, what's your name?' Then they're ringing the bell. But you want to hear them! I'm amazed sometimes the way the people'll get round it. 'What's your name?' 'Where do you come from?' 'What's your Christian name?' 'What's your surname?' You nearly can see the bells ringing, you know, where they're sizing this up, 'What foot do you dig with?'

You'll hear them saying about the dogs!. "Get away you ol' fenian!" There was this wee woman used to go to the church, wee Ivy. Oh, she was drole. A wee, small woman used to go home in the mini bus. She'd say, 'God help that, it's a poor witless creature.' There was this dog, it was rotten, and as soon as it saw the mini bus coming round the corner, it used to wag the ol' tail and come to it. She says, 'Ach, look at it. God help it coming to meet me.'

Then, she says, one day, 'You know it's one of them!' I looked, 'What do you mean, 'It's one of them?' 'It's from the market. It's a fenian one! But God help it. Sure it has to live anyway. So I'll give it an ol' bite to eat.' It was a fenian dog! That's what she said, 'It's one of them.' Like whispered it to me.

Oh, you would just want to get them roused and you'd hear them saying, 'Go on you ol' fenian.' And, you'll think you must be rotten if you're a fenian.

Endnote

In starting from the premise that 'meaning is anchored in the stories persons tell about themselves' (Denzin, 1989: 62), the methodological emphasis throughout has been toward a research endeavour in which any interpretations suggested of members' way of life are, in an unequivocal sense, understandable to the subject of study. Hence, there is an implicit acknowledgement that if interpretations proffered do not make sense to those to whom they refer then, quite simply, they are unacceptable. As such, considerable attention has been paid throughout to the meaning of members' statements; that is to locating what might be identified as *key phrases* that speak directly to, as Denzin says, 'the phenomenon in question'. Of course, it is somewhat apparent that:

... The advantage of the narrative study also generates its main quandaries, which stem from the quantities of accumulating material, on the one hand, and the interpretive nature of the work, on the other. (Lieblich et al, 1998: 9)

And, as a consequence:

... The processes of analysis, evaluation and interpretation are neither terminal nor mechanical. They are always emergent, unpredictable, and unfinished. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 479)

In conclusion, therefore, it must be said that what is presented here is certainly not considered to be either a complete or final statement on particular aspects of a Shankill Road way of life. It is, however, one researcher's interpretation - through the auspices of certain pre-selected bodies of literature - of what aspects of that way of life appear to mean to particular members. At all times during the conduct of this research, as such, it was born in mind that:

... All interpretations are unfinished, provisional and incomplete. They start anew when the researcher returns to the phenomenon. This means that interpretation is always constructed within the hermeneutic circle. As one comes back to an experience and interprets it, prior interpretations and understandings shape what is now seen and interpreted. This does not mean that interpretation is inconclusive, for conclusions are always draw. It only means that interpretation is never finished. To think otherwise is to foreclose one's interpretations before one begins. That is, individuals should not start a

research project thinking that they will exhaust all that can be known about a phenomenon when they end their project. (Denzin, 1989: 64-5)

In referring back to the Introduction and Methodology sections, it is useful at this point to reiterate that what has been undertaken here has, essentially, been an exploration of a style of social research methodology. That is a style of social research focusing deliberately upon the 'particular' rather than the 'general'; upon individual members' highly subjective accounts of their activities, thoughts and feelings rather than a more wide-ranging, more objective, survey of opinions, attitudes, lifestyles or behaviours. As such and as is the dilemma inherent in all social theorising, how then do we go from the particular to the general? How do we speculate – suggest connections or theorise - from the level of the individual to that of social structure or social process? How do we move from a description of an individual's activities, thoughts and feelings to that which is descriptive of a whole way of life?

It would be fair to say that such questions although, clearly, theoretically pertinent do not fall within what might be described as the practical brief of the interpretive methodologies. Indeed, the field of interpretive sociology such as it is, does not begin with such questions but rather takes as its' starting point that of describing *how* individuals – the 'subjects' rather than 'objects' of study - construct and make sense of their social reality in the quite routine practice of their everyday lives. In other words, the emphasis here is upon how individuals – the interpretive subjects - make sense of the world about them. How do they talk about that world? How do they react to events and experiences? And, how do they credit what they experience with meaning? It is questions such as these, so it is argued, which have not been directly addressed in studies, to date, of this particular ethnographic community.

Interpretive sociology, as subject-ive as it undoubtedly is, in its' practice starts from this position of the conscious and experiencing *self* quite simply because so little is known about how this *self* – this 'subject', this experiencing member – actually

achieves and sustains what is clearly a meaningful social existence. And, given this as a starting point, all that has been sought within the context of this dissertation is an illustration - a style of ethnographic description - of how that which is clearly identified as a way of life – in this instance, that of working class Ulster Protestantism - is seen to ‘speak itself’ through individual, highly subject-ive, members’ self-stories. That we might, then, choose to go beyond the limits of such a ‘particular’ description of a way of life as manifest in members’ particular talk and consider what might be the commonalities between one members’ storied life and another is, in practice, the next stage of the interpretive procedure or, as might be described, of theoretical speculation which goes beyond the gamut of this dissertation.

Of course, this is not to suggest that on occasion we – or I, in the context of this dissertation - may not or do not speculate as to what such commonalities might be and, therefore, how the ‘unique’ is linked to the ‘common’ in members’ lived experience of a way of life. However, to do so is not the aim of such an ethnographic description. And, in acknowledging as much, it must be stated that any such interpretations – call them conjectures or speculations – which are suggestive of a connection between the ‘particular’ and the ‘general’, between the individual and social structure or social process, between one member and the collectivity of members, are no more and no less than reasonable interpretations of the primary data and, therefore, bound to be both selective and speculative.

In recognising the inherent theoretical and practical difficulties of any interpretive investigation so it has been appreciated throughout that there is always likely to be much in the way of a blurring of distinctions between what constitutes ‘text’ and the ‘reading’ of that text and, as a corollary, between what constitutes the ‘reading’ and the researcher’s ‘interpretation’ of text; members’ stories. As Lieblich notes:

... As the hermeneutic school argues (Widdershoven, 1993), we found in our own work that no reading is free of interpretation and, in fact, that even at the stage of the

procuring of a text, especially in the dialogical act of conducting a life-story interview, explicit and implicit processes of communicating, understanding, and explaining constantly take place. The illusion that we have a static text of narrative material, and then begin a separate process of reading and interpreting it, is far from the truth. (Lieblich, 1998: 166)

Taking direct note of the work of the hermeneutic school - of Heidegger (1982), Derrida (1981) on deconstruction, et al - it has been much taken for granted throughout the procedures of data collection and the presentation of findings that every interpretation is bound to be prejudiced or, at the very least, prejudices the phenomenon in question. As Heidegger notes, basic concepts and questions which the researcher brings to the study 'determine the way in which we get an understanding beforehand of the subject matter ... (since) ... every inquiry is guided beforehand by what is sought. ... (hence) ... Inquiry itself is the behaviour of the questioner.' (Heidegger, 1962:24). As such, the complex of 'meaning' and 'interpretation' of content - of aspects of Shankill members' way of life - described here constitutes what is the hermeneutic circle; an interpretive circle which, as Denzin et al consider, surrounds the research process.

Interpretive investigation - as undertaken here - clearly is seen to take place within the hermeneutic circle since both subject and researcher are, quite critically, located at the very centre of the research process. Indeed, what is experienced by both researcher and subject - at the end of the day - is, as described by Denzin, a 'double hermeneutic or interpretive circle':

... the subject who tells a self or a personal experience story is, of course at the centre of the life that is told about. The researcher who reads and interprets a self-story is at the centre of his or her interpretation of that story. Two interpretive structures thus interface one another. Each circle overlaps to the degree that the researcher is able to live his or her own way into the subjects personal experience and self-stories. These circles can never perfectly overlap for the subjects experiences will never be those of the researchers. The best that can be hoped for is understanding. (Denzin, 1989: 53)

So, much in order to accomplish this set piece of interpretive investigation the analytic procedure adopted throughout has been, essentially, that of interpretive deconstruction of what is currently known - the assumptions and understandings - of

aspects of a generalised way of life followed by an attempt to confront particular 'content' of selected members' self stories - the subject matter - on its own terms.

Through the adoption of such a methodological procedure, the intention has been to identify what are recurring themes or forms of experience and meaning and - by virtue of recording members' thick descriptions - aiming to locate these within personal biographies. So, although there is much which is purely 'academic discussion' of salient themes - of 'public talk', of the 'language of concealment', of 'working class urban villages', of 'violence', of 'concern for others' - the intention has been to present such themes as generated by the literature within a context bounded by members 'talk'; their statements, their terminology, their stories. By doing so, there has been an attempt at both the comparison of aspects of working class members' 'talk' - moving, for instance, between aspects of the narrative of the Shankill Man to that of Molly - and a synthesis of main themes in order to arrive at an overall sense of what is actually going on; a procedure which, hopefully, brings into focus salient aspects of this way of life and lays the groundwork for further understanding.

Referring back to the Introduction; it was suggested that a working class Protestant way of life as lived on the Shankill Road is much predicated upon routine *contradiction* and *difference*. That, indeed, much for reasons of history and location it is this, almost inherent, state of contradiction and difference which, perhaps, lies at the heart of what is a *hard* way of life. There are and, historically, have been few easy or soft options for members of the Shankill. Given the upheaval of redevelopment and the previous three decades of enduring conflict it is now, perhaps, even more the case that much in order to live - perhaps survive - the life at all members, for the most part, exist in what might best be described as a state of 'suspended contradictions' since, to inspect too closely, challenge too deeply, question too directly, what it is that they

'do' and the 'how' and 'why' they do it, quite simply, they might not be able to live the life at all.

As such, this thesis has been written much for the purpose of making some sense of what, in my experience of this way of life, is an inherently paradoxical state of affairs; a way of life which is - at one and the same time - full of self-evident contradictions; full of pride yet riddled with shame, full of laughter yet undercut with great sadness, full of hospitality yet much predicated on suspicion, hurt and fear, full of purpose yet at times feeling like an almost purposeless existence of 'making do', 'of 'putting up with', of 'scrapping by', of 'no place left to go' and 'little left to do' which even begins to make sense of all that has gone before. Yet, for all that might be said of life in the Shankill, it would still be true to say - as in the words of one very good friend and, since 'born and bred' in the Shankill doubtless a relative of sorts, that:

... I think there'll always be a heart in the Shankill. It still lives on. I'd say the heart of the Shankill is still there because you go up the Shankill Road and the people smile at you! ... Oh, I will always be a Shankill Road woman. And, all those who came from the Shankill would always say, 'I'm Shankill born and bred'. (Shankill Resident: Recorded Interview, 1998)

It is a 'heart', however, which is and always has been somewhat bereft of its full complement of voices for, as Stevenson comments, there are strong traces of a 'stultifying provincial mentality' (1996: 206) amongst those of the Shankill Road who exhibit both a persistent refusal to denigrate their heritage how ever debased and a persistent wish to replicate the past. As he continues, other than those who have gained an education through years of imprisonment, as a general rule members who have shown any signs of 'succeeding' in life - in education or business - pack their bags and move away from the Shankill Road. So, unlike their neighbours in the Falls:

... On the Shankill on the whole, people are likely to be unemployed and less educated because once people do succeed they move out. ... (On the Falls Road) you have your social worker living round the corner from your client. You have your doctor still living in the road, you have your teacher still living on the road. So, there's much more of a cross-section of abilities, of educational development, of occupations, of leadership. (Stevenson, 1996: 206)

There is a need, perhaps, to acknowledge those Shankill Road members, ‘born and bred’, who have proved their talents over the years and moved on; like Beattie in academia, all those who joined the armed forces, some good wee boxers, breeders of champion greyhounds, artisans, artists, medics and many others. However, for those like the Shankill Man cited here, his many friends and comrades - for the most part, ‘just normal people’ - for Molly the new resident and for all those who enjoy the ‘queer good wee bargains’ to be had up the Shankill Road, there is a different sort of story to be told; a story which needs contextualising against a backdrop of persistent social and economic deprivation and conflict.

As a final word, and going full circle, it was stated in the Introduction that several texts having no direct bearing on Northern Ireland proved, perhaps, more influential on the way in which I undertook this research endeavor and, subsequently, chose to interpret and presented my findings. First, there was Shostak’s (1981) insightful anthropological study of the !Kung which drew my full attention to the centrality of members’ self-stories in the description of a way of life. And, then, there was Malan’s, My Traitors Heart; a book which, in my view, constitutes the most insightful portrait of a people in turmoil written with a conscience. As such, the last word goes to Malan:

That’s Msinga; that’s the way it is. If you ask Msinga’s warriors why they fight, they say that someone stabbed someone else’s father in 1965, and that the insult must be avenged. White academics, on the other hand, advance a theory that revolves around apartheid-induced land hunger and frustration. In Msinga, life is an appallingly grim business. ... It makes complete sense that anyone trapped in such a shithole should want to take up arms and fight. All that’s odd about Msinga wars is that Zulus kill one another, instead of joining forces and wiping out the whites across the border. (Malan, 1990: 360)

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