5 'We Are the People'

Protestant Identity and Collective Action in Northern Ireland, 1968-1985

Sarah Campbell

The period after 1968 could be described as one of retreat and political defeat for unionists in Northern Ireland (Gillespie 2007). While the civil rights movement has been thoroughly accounted for (see, for example, Bosi 2006; Prince 2007; Ó Dochartaigh 1997; Purdie 1990), there has been an academic neglect of Protestant protest and collective action in Northern Ireland during the 'Troubles' (with the exceptions of Novosel 2013; Gillespie 2004; Nelson 1984). There have been several occasions during the 35 years of conflict when sections of the loyalist community have tried to use the industrial might of Protestant workers in a national stoppage or strike to achieve a political end, some which have been successful, and others with only a limited success, or unsuccessful. The most successful of these protests was the Ulster Workers' Council strike in May 1974, which brought down the power-sharing executive agreed at Sunningdale. The protests surrounding the Anglo-Irish Agreement a little over a decade later, in 1985-1986, while failing to achieve any political changes, were successful in mobilizing Protestant collective action.

Why were these protests more successful at mobilizing unionists than others during this period? And why was the collective action surrounding the 1985 campaign not as successful as that in 1974? This chapter seeks to answer these questions by examining the role of collective memory and its relationship with activism. Using the 1974 and 1985 campaigns as empirical cases, this research will demonstrate how mnemonic processes play a central role in the articulation of narratives for mobilization. I argue that collective memories help to bring the past into the present, and create responsibilities to those who came before. The result is a mutually constituting relationship between memory and activism (Farthing and Kohl 2013), both where an instrumental construction of collective memories reinforces the collective identity process, and where memories of previous mobilizations influence which activities are considered helpful or successful. Memories can also be considered, simultaneously, as outcomes of mobilization and significant factors in shaping further mobilization (Meyer 2006). Drawing on Fredrick Harris's (2006) theory that collective memory frames collective action, this

chapter probes how political entrepreneurs appropriated the memories and events intrinsic to a Protestant sense of the past and identity, and used them to stimulate collective action and mobilization. It will explore the processes and functions of memory and narratives in divided societies and how they inform each other to explain their significance for mobilization efforts and will suggest that individual participants in these movements were empowered through identifying themselves with history and the sense of making history (Eyerman 2015). The use of historically based collective identities is more significant in deeply divided societies. A defining feature of ethnonationalism is an emphasis on collective memories, shared grievances, and communal claims-making (McGrattan 2013) and a vicious cycle involving identity and retributive collective action becomes almost seamless (Smithey 2012: 87). Furthermore, this ethnonational divide itself became a source of collective identity. The collective identity that was fostered by Protestants between 1968 and 1985 was constructed and reconstructed from origin myths, historical narratives, commentary on contemporary states of affairs and teleological visions, especially as religion served as a resource for identity construction (Smithey 2012: 87). By providing a deeper understanding of the relation between memory and mobilization, this chapter will also question how the politics of memory shapes cultural meaning-making in movements or collective action.

This research draws on a number of qualitative sources: archival materials, secondary sources, newspaper and journal accounts, a semi-structured focus group with nine former loyalists and trade union activists, personal oral testimonies available online,[1] and autobiographies. Archival research at the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), the Northern Ireland Political Collection (NIPC) at the Linen Hall Library and the Conflict Archive on the internet[2] supplied valuable documentation on various loyalist groups, particularly the Ulster Workers' Council and Vanguard, and loyalist newspapers, including the *Protestant Telegraph*, the *Ulster Loyalist*, and the *Loyalist News*. I also conducted a four-hour-long focus group with nine former loyalists and trade union activists on the topic of 'How effective has the Protestant working class been at collective action?' in August 2014.[3]

1 Recorded testimonies from activists at a commemoration event on Sunningdale in Belfast on 19 May 2014 are available at: https://audioboom.com/playlists/1255041-uwc40-ulster-workers-council-strike-40th-anniversary-conference-at-qub.

2 Located online at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/.

3 The participants of the focus group were identified by a 'gatekeeper' who introduced me to those who were willing to participate. I am grateful to Dr Aaron Edwards, who works with members of the loyalist community in his research, for playing this role.

This allowed for comments on broader issues as well as those specific to both 1974 and 1985 and the collection of some impressions on the ideological and discursive structures shared by participants. What was important with this group was to examine what memories (collective and individual) were discussed and what role the memories played in both mobilizing support and informing repertoires of action. It also allows for an examination of an underestimated aspect of memory and mobilization: constraint within movements. Memory can help collective action by drawing on symbolic material from the past, but at the same time can constrain people's ability to mobilize, imposing proscriptions and prescriptions (Zamponi 2013). This becomes important for understanding why the collective action surrounding the 1985 campaign was not as successful as in 1974.

Collective Memory, Collective Identity, and Grievances

Three key areas of social movement study are important for understanding how the past and its public representation influence mobilization, as well as how social movements or collective action participate in the construction of public memory – these include collective memory, collective identity and grievance frameworks, and these three areas of focus are interrelated. A lot of the research has addressed these issues or approaches in paralleled grounds, separate from each other, rather than in conversation with each other. This has the potential of missing the substantial connections between memory, identity and grievances and the way the processes inform each other. In order to understand Protestant mobilization in 1974 and 1985, it is crucial to examine how their identities were reinforced and institutionalized through collective memory and grievance frames.

Collective Memory

Collective memories are partial and constructed experiences of the past, inevitably shaped by a standpoint in the present, and also often a vision of the future (Lee and Guobin 2007: 2). Collective memory is not given but socially constructed (Halbwachs 1992: 48). Halbwachs suggests that 'while the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember' (1992: 22). It is, of course, individuals who remember, not groups or institutions, but these individuals, being located in a specific

context, draw on that context to remember or recreate the past. Halbwachs believed that the present generation becomes conscious of itself in counterposing its present to its own constructed past. He argued that through participation in commemorative rituals with group members of the current generation we can recreate through imaginatively re-enacting a past that would otherwise slowly disappear in the haze of time (1992: 24). Collective memory, then, is the result of an interactive process of selecting, processing, and organizing past events or periods within a framework that grants them political or social significance (Gongaware 2003: 32; 2010).

Charles Tilly has alluded to two aspects of memory's politics: both the substantive claims and the action repertoire of contentions are shaped by how and what people retrieve and conceive of their past: 'From the past, people take not only a history of their relations to potential objects of their claims and a more general sense of their own common identity but also histories of the particular forms of claim making they have at their disposal [...] These pasts frame collective ideas of what actions are generally possible, permissible and desirable' (Tilly 1994: 247). Gongaware (2003) agrees with this idea and contends that collective memory processes provide the framework that organizes the past for present use, provides information used for the collective identity process, and aides in the development of unity and continuity.

If we understand memory as social remembering (Misztal 2003) and as a contested struggle over the meaning of the past, then social movements are an important part of that struggle. Social movements make strategic use of the past and are important social forces in carrying the past into the future (Eyerman 2015: 83). They are the bearers and shapers of individual and collective memory (Eyerman 2015: 83). The theory of collective memory and collective action can broaden our understanding of the micro-dynamics of collective action. Just as a group's sense of identity or its political culture may provide a lens through which to interpret grievances and political opportunities, so collective memory can serve similar purposes for social groups by offering solidarity incentives to engage in cooperative action (Harris 2006: 32). Kubal and Becerra (2014) claim that tactical repertoires and cultural repertoires provide the resources needed to construct collective memories, and repertoires empower memory activists to engage the political sphere, create change, and nurture solidarity within movement organization. Collective memories, therefore, are conduits connecting past experiences with present ones in the formation of collective identity. This is important in the collective identity process

as it provides, through narratives interactively exchanged, an additional source of identity.

Collective Identity

While changing class structures and political opportunities should be viewed as crucial to the political context in which collective action occurs, alone they are insufficient as explanations for popular mobilization. Political structures may influence, but they do not determine, the values and expectations of social actors. Social movement scholarship has developed the concept of collective identity to analyse movement emergence, mobilization, strategic choices, and cultural effects left unanswered by resource mobilization and political process models (Polletta and Jasper 2001). One important focus of their research explores the sense of unity in a social movement. This unity is the result of a process of collective identity (Melucci 1997). Collective identity is defined as 'individuals' cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution' (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285). Pre-existing collective identities are often used for mobilization, for the strategic framing of those identities is critical in recruiting members (2001: 291). Similarly, scholars examining collective memory contend that groups of people gain a sense of cohesion through the interactional construction of collective memories (Gongaware 2003). Despite its wide application, collective identity is still a notoriously abstract concept. Flesher Fominaya (2010) suggests that it could be described as a process that is generated through the interaction of movement members as they attempt to mobilize for a shared goal.

To mobilize their groups, ethnic elites aim at creating a collective sense of unity and solidarity amongst their members (Saleh 2013: 164). Collectively significant events can become (selectively) incorporated in social representations that enable the positioning of ethnic identities and leads to the construction of Protestant narratives that shape collective memory and produce specific political identities that are mutually exclusive.

Grievance Framework

Oberschall (1973) has posited that '[i]deas and beliefs that have a revolutionary potential are usually present and are available for use by a protest leadership. Sentiments of opposition, of being wronged, are also frequently present in the lower orders and can be easily linked with more elaborate ideologies and world views' (quoted in Gamson 1992a: 53). Gamson identifies three

components of collective action frames[4] as injustice, agency, and identity (Gamson 1992b: 7). The injustice frames allow movement actors to construct – and ordinary people to make sense of – their grievances through a sense of moral indignation. Injustice frames not only provide evaluations about what is fair, but they also provide activists with a politicized consciousness to challenge whatever perceived harm or suffering they have encountered (Gamson 1992b: 7). Likewise, Jasper (2014) suggests that anger and indignation, the morally grounded form of anger, are crucial to many aspects of protest. They not only motivate participation (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013), but they direct blame for social problems, create sympathy and admiration for protestors, and guide strategic choices. The mere existence of relative deprivation, however, is not sufficient to mobilize collective action. Transforming such deprivations and grievances into collective action requires a politicization of ethnic identity. As Esman (1994: 28) compellingly argues:

> Mobilization is the process by which an ethnic community becomes politicised on behalf of its collective interests and aspirations. This process requires awareness, usually promoted by ethnic entrepreneurs, that political action is necessary to promote or defend the community's vital collective interests. This awareness results in the recruitment of individuals into the movement or into organizations that purport to speak for the movement.

The next sections will examine how important memory processes are in the allocation of meaning to events by Protestants in Northern Ireland to trigger action in 1974 and 1985. It will suggest that the meaning allocation process takes place in mobilization through grievance articulation, but it will also focus on the mnemonic elements that are involved previous to and alongside the articulation of identity and grievances that trigger mobilization.

Memories, Myths, and 'Ulster Resistance'

Popular memories of unionist resistance in 1912-1914 emerged as a political and cultural force during the post-1969 period in loyalist communities in

4 Snow and Benford (1992: 133-137) demonstrate that collective action frames – defined as 'action-orientated sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organisation' – are the mechanisms that assist activists and would-be activists in crystallizing their grievances.

Northern Ireland. As people struggled for moral and cognitive frameworks to understand, assess, and sometimes resist the significant changes in their lives,[5] memories of earlier successful resistance flourished. Events such as resistance to Home Rule in 1912 represented structures of meaning that that were constructed through a process of streamlining their representations and imagery. The excess of meaning that these structures carried made them potential triggers of mobilization, which provided power to the narratives that articulated them (Vélez-Vélez 2013: 56). Jackson (1992: 164) argues that the unionist rulers of Northern Ireland saw in the issues and personalities of 1912-1914 an important moral prop in the same way as varieties of nationalism have sought to cultivate the legacies of Wolfe Tone or Patrick Pearse.

A traumatic consequence of the past 35 years for the Protestant working class, however, has been its crisis of identity. Loyalist ideology is constructed so as to draw on class, community, sectarianism, and national identities. All these, however, are subordinate to the dominant representation of that ideology, the notion of 'Britishness' within the collective whole (McAuley 1994; Hall 1994; Nelson 1984; Novosel 2013). Rolston reinforces this point, arguing that the very variety of mural imagery in loyalist areas reflects the lack of political consensus, while playing a central role in the construction of community identity and ideals (Rolston 1992; Graham 1992). Movement leaders also commonly overlay different collective memories to unify divergent groups who often present a fragmentary list of demands (Farthing and Kohl 2013: 9-10). The mural discourse demonstrates the importance of past events to Protestant identity and the role of historical precedent in contemporary attitudes and decision-making.[6] The events of 1912-1914 serve as a useful foundation or creation myth for unionists in Northern Ireland. In 1968, the *Protestant Telegraph* declared:

> In 1912 Ulster was in the peculiar position whereby she would have had to oppose British troops in order that she, Ulster, might remain British. That day may come again [...] Our fathers had to arm themselves in defence of previous traitors in Westminster, and it seems as if history is going to

5 For Protestants in particular, these changes included the disbandment of the 'B-Specials' in 1969, the proroguing of Stormont in 1972, and the introduction of a power-sharing executive in 1974.

6 Critical events in Protestant time include the 1641 Rebellion, the Siege of Derry in 1689, the Battle of the Boyne in 1990, the defiance of Home Rule between 1912-1914, and 1 July 1916 when the 36th (Ulster) Division was destroyed near Thiepval on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

> repeat itself. Wilson and Lynch will not be dealing with weaklings like O'Neill when they come to deal with the hard core of Ulster Protestants. (Protestant Telegraph 1968)

The narrative behind the slogan 'We Are the People' is crucial in the shared identity of Protestants in Northern Ireland. Shirlow and McGovern (1997: 1) argue that whether it is written on the walls of Belfast, spoken by the Apprentice Boys of Derry, or sung at Windsor Park, the phrase 'We Are the People' is a clear and unequivocal statement of loyalty and devotion to and from the Protestant people of Ulster. As such, this adage is a grand signifier of loyalty, devotion, and identity. Declan McGonagle (2006: 114) remembered Protestant protesters in Northern Ireland shouting, 'We are the people' in the face of the emerging civil rights campaign of the late 1960s. The battle cry, in other words, represented a fundamental mind-set, a self-validating sense that was based on a myth of the way that things naturally and elementally are and must be. If anything, it is a constant reminder of a self-identified community who sense that they are besieged and threatened by sociopolitical and cultural oblivion. The slogan, therefore, fabricates notions of cultural solidarity and collective power. This foundation narrative became increasingly important among grass-roots unionism during the late 1960s and 1970s, as the descent into violence created a crisis of confidence in this community.

The ways in which Protestant leaders exploited collective memories of Edward Carson and his resistance to Home Rule in 1912, and later the Ulster Workers' Council strike's success in bringing down the power-sharing government in 1974, highlight the ways collective memories can have a homogenizing effect, constructing a collective identity among activists and creating conditions for mobilization. The significance in examining the narratives is to highlight the dependence of these constructs with the mnemonic structures to convey and elicit meaning. For instance, the experience of resistance in 1912 and loyalty during the First World War as mnemonic structures are seen as giving meaning to the claim of resisting power-sharing in 1974. So as loyalists equated the resistance of Home Rule in 1912 with the ultimate tool of resisting any further erosion of Protestant identity through power-sharing, the recollections of the 1912 movement and involvement in the First World War as a collective memory are the ones that substantiate the claim as legitimate and significant.

The fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Stormont in 1971 was met by the signing of a pledge that was modelled on the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant (1912). The language of both is almost identical, with the

1971 pledge committing the signatories: '[T]hroughout this our time of threatened calamity to stand by one another in defending our cherished position of citizenship in the United Kingdom and in using all lawful means to defeat any conspiracy to overthrow our Parliament'.

Siege Mentalities and Protestant Working-Class Grievances

While Protestant opinion perceived the civil rights as a Catholic movement, many working-class Protestants could identify with its demands. Resentment existed, however, that it seemed to only be addressing Catholics (as noted in interviews carried out by Ferguson and McAuley, in this volume).

Jackie Redpath, a community activist in the Protestant working-class Shankill area of Belfast in the 1970s, explained the sense of grievance felt by many Protestants at the time:

> From a Protestant working class point of view, from a Protestant community point of view [...] what was happening was the very quick stripping away of almost everything of what you had known as certainty [...] It felt like everything you had known was now up for grabs and everything you had known was being stripped away. And it stirred up that old sense, which was hundreds of years old, of being a community under siege [...] [The loss of Stormont and the increasingly deteriorating security situation meant] it was a time when your very identity was under question. There were no more certainties. (Redpath 2014)

While grievances were related to identity to a larger extent, they also had an economic dimension. By the time of the civil rights movement's agitation, Northern Ireland was an employment black spot within the United Kingdom. In 1984, for example, a year before demonstrations against the Anglo-Irish Agreement, almost 70 per cent of households in the Protestant Rathcoole estate in Newtonabbey were in receipt of state benefits, with those in work largely on very low incomes.

The Mobilization of Workers: The Ulster Workers' Council Strike, 1974

Protestants responded to the suspension of Stormont and the introduction of direct rule by Westminster in a number of ways. Even before this

event, Protestants had begun to mobilize – the lack of confidence in the established authorities which was felt by grass-roots unionism, and particularly working-class loyalists, led to the emergence of new groups in several key areas. New political movements were formed, including a major new loyalist paramilitary organization, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), organizations of industrial workers, the Loyalist Association of Workers, led by shipyard worker, Billy Hull, and Ulster Vanguard, led by Bill Craig (Gillespie 2004). Ian Paisley and his Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) also came to prominence in the late 1960s and took centre stage in Protestant mobilization efforts in 1970s.

Ulster Vanguard was an attempt to re-create the anti-Home Rule alliance of politicians, physical force militants, and industrial workers in a three-wing movement against various enemies of 'true loyalism' (Nelson 1984: 101). Vanguard focused its policies on a collective memory of Protestant privilege in the pre-1968 era. The policy of Vanguard related, in its entirety, to sovereignty in Northern Ireland and a return to the pre-1968 status quo. It was an expression of the Protestant 'siege mentality', couched in constitutional terms (Nelson 1984: 101). Between February and March 1972, in reaction to British plans to remove internal security from Stormont's remit, Vanguard organized a number of progressively larger rallies. These culminated in a final demonstration in Belfast's Ormeau Park on 18 March with approximately 60,000 in attendance (although estimated at 92,000 by organizers). Drawing on the historical collective memory of Edward Carson and the founding of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in 1913, a noteworthy feature of the protests was the inspection of persons drawn up in ranks. A Home Affairs report noted that '[t]his militaristic pose was more notable at the final Rally in Belfast where a guard of honour was formed by members of the U.S.C. association; the Colours of the old U.V.F were paraded; women in uniform type clothing were drawn up in ranks and a contingent from the Oldpark Defence Association paraded in dark glasses and desert-hats, etc.' (PRONI 1972). The Loyalist Association of Workers also connected the current situation in 1972 and historical collective memories of Carson in 1912 and the rebellion and massacres of 1641. One of their pamphlets from March 1972 reflected:

> Portadown certainly lived up to its reputation on Saturday last with thousands of its Loyalist citizens displaying their loyalty to VANGUARD, as their Fathers did to Carson. This is the action we expected from the loyal provincial town, and by quoting Col. Saunderson when Home Rule was suggested 50 years ago – 'It may pass the House of

> Commons but it won't pass Portadown'. So today the sons of the men 50 years ago say exactly that. NOT AN INCH! (Loyalist Association of Workers 1972)

The decision to suspend Stormont was also met by a two-day strike. Many thousands of Protestant workers stayed home from work, paralysing the region and bringing industry, commerce, and public services to an almost complete halt (Irish Times 1972). This show of popular discontent demonstrated the effectiveness of the strike and convinced loyalists of all shades that such tactics could be used again for political ends. The tactic was used again in February 1973 in reaction to the internment of two UDA members, the first loyalists to be interned, following a grenade attack on a Catholic works bus. This strike, however, did not appeal to the wider unionist community on account of its narrow grievance framing, and because the violence that accompanied it alienated many Protestants. Yet, both these instances showed unionists the political effectiveness of using the industrial might of Protestant workers in a national stoppage.

In May 1974, an assorted collection of Protestant industrial workers and paramilitaries succeeded in bringing down the power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive. The Ulster Workers' Council (UWC) strike was called in protest to the political and security situation in Northern Ireland and more particular at the proposals in the Sunningdale Agreement, which would have given the government of the Republic of Ireland a direct say in the running of the region. The strike lasted two weeks and succeeded in bringing down the power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive. For the two weeks of the strike, effective political power was in the hands, not of Westminster nor of elected Northern Irish politicians, but of factory workers and labourers (Nelson 1984: 155). Martin Dillon (1994) has commented that '[t]he modern rebellion of 1974 is one of the most significant – and intriguing – events of the last 25 years of conflict [...] It was an episode of complex political, social and military events [...] The rebellion, by a large section of the loyalist and Unionist community, is a landmark in the history of the period'.

In early April 1974, the magazine of the UDA, the *Ulster Loyalist*, alerted its readers to the existence of the Ulster Workers' Council. The Northern Ireland that the council would fight for, it was stressed, would be one free of privilege and discrimination and notice was served on politicians, 'whatever banner they operate under, that the workers are no longer tools to be used to forward their political ambitions but equal

partners and that the future of Northern Ireland will no longer be decided behind closed doors between rival groups of politicians, each jockeying for the best advantage for himself and to hell with the workers' (Ulster Loyalist 1974). The group emerged from what Glenn Barr (2014) called an 'abysmal' lack of leadership in Protestant working-class communities, in an attempt to fill this void. Acutely aware of the success of miners in Britain in forcing industry down to a three-day working week by reducing electricity supplies, the UWC adopted this action as a tactic in their protest (Barr 2014).

The results and impact of the collective action in May 1974 had far-reaching consequences for future action. 1974 became central to loyalist collective memory. It was remembered because it met two conditions: activists considered the event commemorable and it met the mnemonic capacity to create a commemorative vehicle (Armstrong and Crage 2006). Disruptive, violent, large-scale events are more likely to be viewed as newsworthy. Direct participation or perception that an event caused a change (for better or worse) in the fate of a group also enhances commemorability (Armstrong and Crage 2006).

The Ghost of Carson and 1985

While the strike may have ostensibly brought an end to the power-sharing executive, and so was seen as a victory for loyalists, Sarah Nelson (1976: 223) notes that the stoppage could not be seen as a 'victory for the working class' because the strike itself was not fundamentally about a class issue. Further, while some of those who were active in the constituent groups of the UWC joined the United Ulster Unionist Council and ran in elections for the Constitutional Convention in the aftermath of the fall of Sunningdale, thereby politicizing some of the gains made on the streets; the grass-roots movement itself dissipated in the months after the strike. Gillespie argues that in those months it became clear that the UWC as an organization hardly existed. It had, however, provided the glue which held together a disparate coalition of loyalist workers, politicians, and paramilitaries just long enough to force the collapse of the power-sharing executive (Gillespie 2004: 129-130). Meyer (2006: 202) also contends that the stories people hear about the past influence how they view future possibilities and, most significantly, their prospective role in making it. Thus, 1974 would be seen as a success by mobilizing forces in unionism and would be used in future.

It would take a new confluence of events and grievances to establish the same momentum in order to lead to mass collective action again. As Andy Tyrie, chairman of the UDA remarked a couple of months after the strike:

> Let's be honest about it. As far as the loyalist paramilitary organisations are concerned, they will never be the same again until there's a crisis situation. All we can do is hold on to a good nucleus of men and build and organise, and wait for the opportunity to ride the waves again. (Fortnight 1985)

In the weeks and months after the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed on 15 November 1985 between Britain and the Republic of Ireland on what amounted to joint-sovereignty of Northern Ireland, there were two models which could be followed by leaders hoping to mobilize unionist reaction: the first was Edward Carson's leadership in 1912 against Home Rule; the second was the UWC strike of 1974. Both events had inspired many unionists to believe that loyalist mass mobilization, backed up by the threat of industrial disruption and physical force, would be enough to frustrate the plans of the British government (Focus Group 2014). Loyalist strategy sought a dramatic demonstration of community solidarity. At the same time, these two moments of popular Protestant activism were remembered as a golden age of resistance, and ones that should be emulated.

While the threat of strike on the same scale of 1974 was implied, loyalist leaders evoked 1912 and Carson to mobilize their supporters. One very clear connection between 1912 and 1985 was the establishment of 'Ulster Clubs'. The Ulster Clubs were set up by radical unionists in the rural areas of Northern Ireland after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in November 1985. This was an attempt to provide both organization and muscle to the unionist campaign against the initiative. In their conscious mimicry of Carson's Ulster Clubs in the fight against Home Rule at the beginning of the twentieth century, they represented a classic instance of unionism's tendency to look back to past victories in order to deal with the present crises (Cochrane 1997: 86; McBride 2001).

Ulster Club spokesman, Alan Wright, commented: 'It is a case of history repeating itself. In 1893 when the first Home Rule Bill for Ireland was presented to Parliament, the Unionists got together and formed a Unionist Club. So we decided that we needed a structure that everyone could come together under' (Fortnight 1986). With a direct reference to Carson, Wright stated, '[we] need to have what Carson had which was a people's army to make this country totally ungovernable to bring this government to its

knees'. But Wright also recognized the need to conjure the memory of 1974, and the role that ordinary, working-class Protestant mobilization played in the result:

> Obviously comparisons are being made to '74. We have to recall that in February 1974 the politicians went back with a massive mandate to smash Sunningdale. But the politicians didn't smash Sunningdale. They started the momentum but the workers and the ordinary people reminded the government that it was still, very much loyalist fingers on all the buttons in this society [...] We see this Agreement as being the first half mile in the road to Dublin rule. And that is nauseating, repugnant and totally unacceptable. I believe you will see something even greater than 1974. (Fortnight 1986).

The most obvious expression of loyalist opposition was the massive 'Ulster Says No!' rally in Belfast on 23 November 1985, where the crowd was reported to be 100,000 (although unionists claimed 200,000). In his speech to the crowd, Ian Paisley directly quoted Carson: 'We ask for no privileges, but we are determined none shall have privilege over us'. While the links between collective memories and collective action seemed much stronger in 1985 than they were in 1974, mobilization of Protestants against the Anglo-Irish Agreement failed to reach the same level as that of Sunningdale. Leaders were unable to secure unified support on what action to take. The *Belfast Telegraph*, conducted a poll of Catholics and Protestants in January 1986 and noted that only 22 per cent of those surveyed were in agreement with taking industrial action against the agreement (though considerably stronger amongst the working-class), and 74 per cent disagreed (Belfast Telegraph 1986).[7] Jackson (1992: 174) has suggested that the Unionist command has shown itself capable of occasionally mobilizing its resources; but it has also proved to be much less adept at coping with its own transient success and lacks the ability to supply coherent direction or a long-term flexible plan of campaign. This certainly seems to have been the case in 1985-1986. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, as outlined in Bosi and De Fazio (in this volume), scholars tend to underemphasize specific characteristics of mobilization, including the intra-movement competition and conflict *within* heterogeneous ethnonationalist groups. This appears to have been

7 Among the Protestants from the C2DE group who were surveyed, 37.1 per cent were in favour of taking industrial action in protest to the Agreement (compared to 25.9 per cent in the ABC1 group).

the case in 1985 more so than in 1974. Those within the movement could not be considered a monolithic collective and there were divisions over what sort of action to take. A memo from J.E. McConnell of the Political Affairs Division of the Northern Ireland Office on the aftermath of the 'Day of Action' in March 1986 noted that: 'All the people who rang me [...] are deeply opposed to the Agreement but while they supported the strike, they are extremely concerned about the rejection of the Downing Street talks by their leaders [...] They now feel that Unionists in Northern Ireland are in an impossible position' (PRONI 1986). The collective identities constructed from historical myths by movement mobilizers around opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement are largely based on polarized identities that are found in deeply divided societies. When groups define themselves and each other in terms of the conflict, they collude in perpetuating the psychological bases for destructive conflict (Northrup 1992). Further, this zero-sum stance means that compromise becomes impossible and the protest is seen as ineffective when it does not achieve the aims it sets out to.

Also, while memories of particular transformative events, such as 1912, are produced and reproduced at times of political crises in unionism, which enhance the capacity of the community to mobilize, it can also constrain it. Benford (2002) argues that narrative and storytelling can act as a means of social control in social movements. This could be seen in two ways in the 1985 campaign. Firstly, the state used the idea of historically based narratives and collective identities to control the action that protesters took. It was noted in a memo that civil disobedience (non-payment of rent, rates, electricity, and water) could be used by unionists to oppose the Anglo-Irish Agreement. This was seen as one of the more problematic actions unionists could take because the arrangements for dealing with non-payment of such items would not cope with mass refusal. Ministers were, therefore, encouraged to 'emphasise traditional values of Protestant ethic to counter any pressure for such action' (PRONI 1985).

Secondly, there were divisions over the use of violence and this did not sit easily with constructions of identity based on the past. On reactions to the 'Day of Action' in March 1986, it was noted: 'The general feeling is one of revulsion against the behaviour of many of the strike supporters on Monday [...] There is no doubt that many supporters of the strike have been frightened at the ferocity of the action taken by the "hardmen"' (PRONI 1986).

Nonetheless, while the collective action was not sustained, nor did it achieve any meaningful political change envisaged by the protesters, it does demonstrate that collective memory played a significant role in mobilizing the masses, even if only for a short period of time.

Conclusion

Collective memories help bring the past into the present, and create responsibilities to those who came before. These memories meet a number of needs and people are likely to turn to them when they are struggling to make sense of events in times of uncertainty. Collective memory links a sense of the past to present day injustices. In Northern Ireland, the social appropriation of collective memories, particularly historical memories, is extensively used by community leaders and politicians (McGrattan 2013). These pre-existing narratives and memories can be drawn upon by leaders to build lines of solidarity and/or forge strategies for collective action. Events are transformed into collective memories through the process of social appropriation. This process of social appropriation triggers collective action as actors use the event to construct action frames that signal favourable environmental conditions. Consequently the event is incorporated into a social group's memory repertoire. The capacity of mnemonic practices to provide meaning to current events in light of the past, and potentially directing future ones, brings about the quality of memory processes to engage audiences into action (Vélez-Vélez 2013: 61). This does not always have the desired effect, as is seen by the 1985 example. While the collective memory of Carson was once again re-appropriated to mobilize support, the support was limited, signalling that other factors are indeed necessary to sustain action, as well as suggesting that movement narratives can have a constraining effect, in tandem with a mobilizing one.

As Lee and Yang (2007) demonstrate, nostalgic and critical memory is not sufficient to bring about sufficient collective action. The emergence of labour unrest also depends on the local structure of economic and political opportunities and the organizational capacity of workers' communities. Nonetheless, because collective memories represent more than recollections of shared events and happenings, and also entail the prescription of symbolic events in relation to present (and future) ones, a focus on memory and collective action adds a meso level of analysis to social movement research. Ferguson and McAuley's research (in this volume) explores the role of collective identity among loyalists and the importance of narratives in its creation. They suggest that these narratives either perpetuate violence or can be reformulated to abandon political violence in a post-conflict society. This makes the process of collective memory and identity constructs in mobilizing communities even more worthy of consideration.

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