Integrated education and Irish language policy under the Good Friday Agreement

A nuanced theoretical approach to social and political issues in Northern Ireland

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Abstract:

Almost two decades after the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, opinions differ in terms of its effectiveness in fostering peace and reconciliation. Although the number of deaths linked to the conflict has sharply decreased since the signing of the agreement, a series of recent political developments have underlined some inadequacies within the current framework. Within academia, the two opposing schools of thought, namely consociationalism and integrationism, have been engaged in a debate regarding the empirical case of Northern Ireland and how it relates to current political science theory on conflict resolution in multi-ethnic states. This paper proposes an argument for a more nuanced theoretical approach to peacemaking by exploring two political issues that have been particularly problematic in Northern Ireland following the implementation of the Agreement. By analyzing the issues of integrated education and of the Irish language through the lens of both consociationalism and integrationism, I plan to further advance the theoretical debate in addition to providing relevant academic research applicable to the case of Northern Ireland. The inclusion of research and literature from a variety of disciplines allows for a more evidence driven approach to understanding the challenges facing the Northern Irish peace process today.

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Introduction:

The sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland have been entrenched in the local society ever since partition in 1920; in that regard, the conflict that broke out in the late 60s known as "the Troubles" was by no means an unexpected turn of events. Up until the civil rights movement, the Protestant majority governed with little resistance; all levers of power were controlled by Protestants and Catholic discrimination was rampant. Ever since the establishment of the new state, the civil service was controlled by Protestants, with Catholics making up only 10% of the lowest position within the civil service (McKittrick & McVea 2002). The violent unrest that followed this period of sectarian division known as "the Troubles" led to the deaths of about 3800 people in a total population of less than 1.5 million people, and a legacy of mutual hate that seemed impossible to overcome. In 1972 alone, almost 500 people lost their lives as a result of the conflict, a year that would go down as the bloodiest of all the Troubles. Despite the volatile situation and death toll throughout the 90s, a large breakthrough in the peace process came in the form of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA). This power sharing agreement, signed in 1998, was designed to ease tensions and provide a framework for long term stability through a series of democratic institutions operating in a bi-sectarian manner. It was based on the principle of consent that adopted, to a certain extent, the aspirations of both ethnoreligious groups. In article 2 of the agreement, all signatories are expected to adhere to the principle that no change in the status of Northern Ireland can be achieved without "a consent of the majority of its people" (Good Friday Agreements 1998). This finely calibrated statement encompasses both the aspiration for a United Ireland expressed by Catholic nationalists as well as the firm belief held by Protestant unionist that they, as the majority, should ultimately be masters of their own fate. The years that followed the establishment of the agreement constitute irrefutable evidence of its effectiveness: since 1999, the number of deaths has not surpassed 20 and has steadily declined, with 2008 being the first year with no conflict related casualties since the early 60s (see Figure 1). To this day, the number of annual confirmed sectarian killings linked to paramilitary groups remains under 5. Despite a small number of casualties persisting to this day, the Good Friday Agreements has undoubtedly contributed to an environment of relative stability with the avoidance of large scale paramilitary violence. Nevertheless, the gradual decrease in violence was not the only breakthrough spearheaded by the agreement; the years following its implementation saw a considerable shift away from para-militarism and into the political scene. Parties with a long-standing tradition of endorsing paramilitary violence during the Troubles found a way to channel their discontent by political means, something previously thought to be unachievable.

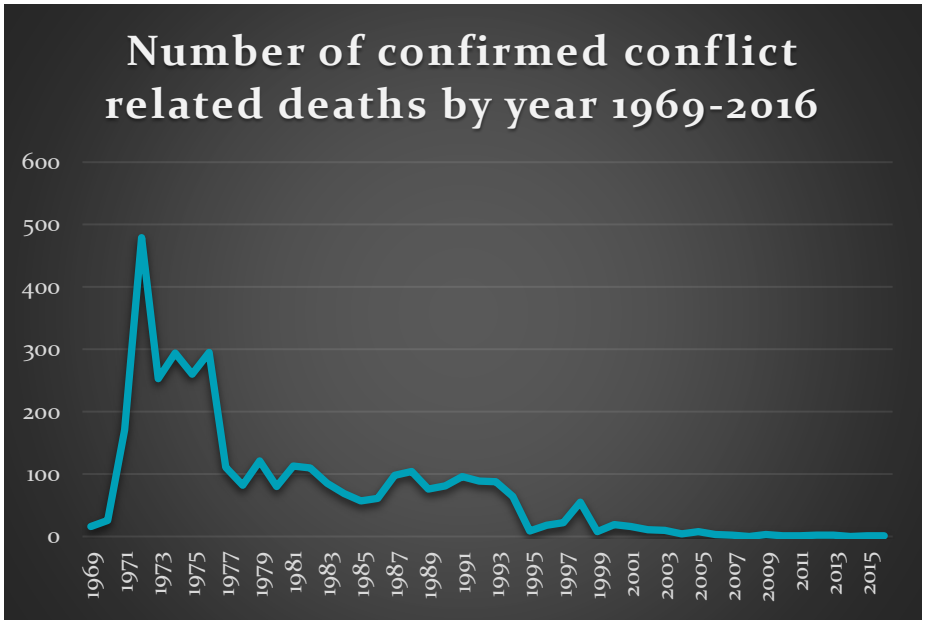
Despite the relative success of the agreement in allaying the death toll of this internecine dispute, a series of long standing issues have continuously vitiated Northern Irish politics. Among them is the highly divisive issue of the Irish language and integrated education; In January 2017, the decision of the Unionist Agriculture minister to rename a boat from Irish to English triggered a considerable backlash by the Nationalists who saw it as an attack on the Irish language (The Journal 2017). The nationalist party of Sinn Fein has long argued for the implementation of an Irish Language act similar to those in place in Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. This would, in turn, mean that official documentation, parliament debates and justice should be provided in the Irish language, at the expense of the state. The framework for the promotion of the Irish language provided by the Good Friday Agreements remains relatively vague and is thus subject to a lot of controversy on both sides. In the case of education, the ambiguity of the Good Friday Agreements has led, once again, to a lack of decisive action from the government in order to ensure the wider availability of integrated education. What is more puzzling is perhaps the fact that a considerable part of parents (74%) in Northern Ireland support the promotion of integrated education and

would opt for the option if it was available (McGlynn et al. 152). The extent of the divide in education is, to put it mildly, alarming. In 2012, 91% of Protestant children attended controlled, majority protestant schools (Torney 2012). Similarly, 88% of Catholic children attended Catholic controlled schools (Torney 2012), with the percentages remaining high to this day, with around 90% of students educated separately.

In the light of this seemingly complex and disconcerting political reality, an academic debate has flourished around the case study of Northern Ireland, with the two opposing schools of thought attempting to adopt the Northern Irish peace process as their "poster boy". Although integrationists and consociationalists are both in favor of the power-sharing agreement, the theoretical approach, aspirations and end goals on either side differ considerably. This disagreement in theoretical terms leads to a number of different positions and solutions proposed by each school of thought. Consociationalism (or segregationism) is based on the principle that minimizing contact between groups is the only way to ensure relative peace and avoid large scale violence. As opposed to that, integrationists hold the assumption that power sharing agreements such as the one in Northern Ireland provide a basis for further social integration and thus long term peace. In the issue of education, this leads each side to propose radically different solutions: it should come as no surprise that consociationalists wouldn't like to see any radical change to the current system. Their assumption that additional group contact through education has the potential to create tensions is enough to deter them from encouraging the development of integrated education. Nevertheless, a growing body of evidence from both Northern Ireland and abroad establishes a link between integrated schooling and an altering of identity and mutual perception of ethnic groups, suggesting that educational reform along integrationist lines holds the key to long term reconciliation (McGlynn et al. 2007). As opposed to that, research done regarding linguistic integration of minority languages underlines the limits that such an approach can have, especially in the context of a fractured multi-ethnic state. A fully fledged linguistic integration as advocated by integrationists is, as I will argue, unrealistic in the case of Northern Ireland. A nuanced theoretical approach to peace and power-sharing remains essential and should be adopted on a case to case basis in the light of academic evidence. As I will try to demonstrate, none of the existing frameworks fully encompasses the complexity of the case study.

In the context of this thesis, I plan to indulge in an understanding of two intractable political issues that have been the source of much discontent. By relating these issues to both the theoretical discussion and the Good Friday Agreement, I plan to provide a deeper practical understanding through the use of both data and empirical evidence. These reflections will ultimately be linked to the theoretical discussion between integrationists and consociationalists regarding conflict resolution and provide a basis for further discussion. Firstly, I will present a brief historical background of the conflict that is crucial in understanding the peace process. I will then proceed by giving a concise review of the literature and methodology in addition to an analysis of the Good Friday Agreement. By presenting a contextual view of the agreement from both the integrationist and consociational lens, I will present the overview of the current theoretical debate and its relevance in the case of Northern Ireland. That will be followed by the core of my argument which includes the analysis of the previously mentioned political issues (Integrated education and the Irish language) in the theoretical and historical context with the use of relevant data and research. The Chapter on the Irish language will include an ample amount of information regarding recent political developments and how they relate to my argument regarding the integration of the Irish language.

Figure 1:



Data: The Guardian & Cain

Historical Perspectives: The Troubles

Before indulging in any analysis of the Northern Irish peace process or political developments, it is of crucial importance to shed light on the historical developments of the conflict. As previously mentioned, the ethnoreligious tensions that exploded after 1969 were the product of a long history of sectarian divisions and injustices. Ever since the establishment of the Northern Irish state in 1920, violence was rampant, with the two years following the partition of Ireland leading to 428 deaths by sectarian violence throughout the newly founded state (McKittrick & McVea 4). Northern Ireland was established as a Protestant majority state conceived to accommodate the descendants of Scottish and English settlers that had moved to the island of Ireland following the battle of Boyne and the Protestant ascendancy. Despite being a considerable minority of upwards of 500 000, Catholics were held away from political power, often with very questionable means. One such example of political isolation took place in the second largest city of Londonderry, of which the population was primarily made up of Catholics. Before the 1936 local election and with Unionists in dire straits over the possibility of losing the local council to Nationalists, the Northern Irish government based in the Stormont parliament in Belfast applied a system of boundary manipulation in order to ensure that the 7500 Protestant voters would elect more representatives than the 10000 Catholics living in the city (McKittrick & McVea 8). This system came to be known as "gerrymandering" and would play a significant role in the later civil rights movement that gained popularity among the Catholic population. In local elections, suffrage was exclusively for landowners: citizens living in rented space or young adults living with their parents were excluded from the voting process. Similarly, in 1922, the proportional representation system put in place by the British in the 1920 Ireland act was replaced by a "first past the post" system with redrawn electoral maps constructed to maintain unionist control. Although the level of electoral gerrymandering is debated, the electoral reforms did lead to a considerable number of local councils being lost by Nationalists in the 1922 election (J. Whyte 1983). Nationalists were manipulated out of local government control through the reform of electoral boundaries (J. Whyte 1983). Terence O'Neill's arrival at the position of prime minister of Northern Ireland came with an inheritance of sectarian inequalities, structural imbalances and societal tensions: Catholics had effectively given up hope in the political process and faced crucial difficulties in employment. These circumstances had effectively set the stage for the decades of vicious violence that erupted. With an alienated Catholic minority isolated from the corridors of political power and a Protestant majority under a constant fear of finding themselves reunited with Ireland against their will, it was a matter of time until the Pandora's Box was eventually opened and centuries of suppressed tensions surfaced.

Under the presidency of Terence O'Neill, cracks started to appear in the social fabric of the Northern Irish state. The establishment of the Campaign for Social Justice in 1963 marked the beginning of the civil rights movement, characterized as a majority catholic movement for equality. In addition to the growing unrest among the Catholic population came the election of a labor government in the Westminster. Prime Minister Harold Wilson made it clear, early in his mandate, that the issue of Northern Ireland was to be addressed with caution and determination after a portion of his party launched the "Campaign for democracy in Ulster" initiative, drawing attention to problems in Northern Ireland (McKittrick &McVea 37). The attempts of O'Neill to reshape the political structures and deliver reforms needed to avoid the conflict were largely unsuccessful. On

one hand, Unionist hardliners like Ian Paisley and others in the Stormont assembly mounted an all-out offensive against any cessation or change in the system. On the other hand, leaders of the civil rights movement and the Catholic minority as a whole remained skeptical of both his true intentions as well as his ability to deliver on his promises (McKittrick & McVea 52). The two years following O'Neill's resignation and the arrival in power of James Chichester Clark would lead to an escalation of the violence and some of the bloodiest years on record. In 1972, the death toll rose to 497 people, the highest during the entire Troubles. The situation had effectively escalated out of control: the decision of Faulkner (the newly elected prime minister) to use interment without trial in 1971 as a way to de-escalate the security situation had completely backfired. The operation codenamed "Operation Demetrius" was launched, targeting numerous Provisional IRA members and aimed at dismantling the paramilitary group. The inaccurate records led to the accidental arrests of uninvolved civilians, a miscalculations that, in turn, led to greater radicalization among Catholic youth (McCleery 2015). The question of whether the right people were indeed interned is a hotly debated issue, the jailed suspects would later create a point of friction during the peace negotiations, particularly around the legal status of prisoners affiliated with paramilitary groups. Incidents like Bloody Sunday and the numerous bombings by the IRA would escalate the violence and lead to an eventual "takeover" of political power by the British government and the temporary abolition of the Stormont parliament.

The first attempt to establishing peace came in the form of the Sunningdale agreement in 1974. In a multilateral negotiation in late 1973, the three main parties that would later form the executive along with the British and Irish governments, began drawing the plan for a power-sharing agreement that would bring an end the rampant violence (McKittrick & McVea 95). Under the initiative of the then Secretary of state for Northern Ireland William Whitelaw, some considerable compromises were achieved; with the establishment of the Council of Ireland, some advisory powers were provided to the Irish government. The Irish government had to, in turn, clarify its intensions by stating that it did not condone of any change of status for Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority of the people. This principal of consent would later be the founding stone of the Good Friday Agreements. Nevertheless, unlike the Good Friday Agreements, the Sunnigndale Agreement was short-lived. The power-sharing government that included the Catholic SDLP party collapsed in May 1974 under the mounting pressure of a large scale Unionist strike that had brought the country to its knees (Melaugh 2010). The outright rejection of the agreement by a considerable part of Unionism had effectively thrown Northern Ireland back into stalemate and sectarian conflict with paramilitary groups intensifying their campaigns of violence. Following the crisis, the political scene had fragmented considerably, with the resigning Prime Minister Faulkner having lost the control of his own party, the UUP. The DUP, formed in 1971 by Ian Paisley, was gaining ground among Protestant voters. In 1975, the Constitutional Convention set up by the British government to establish a platform for the discussion on the Status of Northern Ireland, saw 15 members of the DUP elected (DUP 2017). Around 1977, the IRA was going through a period of instability, as newer members of the organization slowly replaced the aging leadership of O Bradaigh and O Conaill. The arrival of Martin McGuiness and Gerry Adams initiated a shift in IRA policy, the political wing of the IRA, known as Sinn Fein, was gaining ground after the 1975 IRA ceasefire. The total abstinence from the political arena was slowly transitioning to a presence in both politics through Sinn Fein and the continuing paramilitary struggle with the IRA. In the years that followed, Republican violence continued, leading to the deaths of numerous innocent civilians.

The arrival of Margaret Thatcher at Downing Street saw a political breakthrough in the peace process, in what would come to be known as the Anglo Irish Agreement. Following bilateral negotiations between Thatcher and Haughey in 1981 and later with FitzGerald, the agreements essentially established a framework of cooperation between the two main actors. The agreement provided the ability of the Irish government to participate in the running of Northern Ireland through a series of measures such as the intergovernmental conference (Anglo Irish Agreement 1985). This platform allowed the Irish government to provide policy proposals regarding Northern Ireland and discuss these issues with the British government (Anglo Irish Agreement 1985). Although this didn't offer the possibility of joined rule as some Republican circles had hoped, it did offer more than an "advisory" role to the Irish government. Once again, the agreement was met with a fierce Unionist response. Nevertheless, the numerous strikes and political boycotts were insufficient in bringing about the collapse of the agreement which remained in place throughout the 80s and the peace process in the 90s. It is important to note that the Anglo Irish Agreement only provided a platform for cooperation between the British and Irish government, it did not entail any changes to the running of Northern Irish assembly which was still under abolition. Home rule from Westminster lasted from 1972 all the way to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

The late 80s and early 90s were dominated by IRA attacks on strategic British targets; the arming of the IRA by the Gadhafi regime had provided them with a series of powerful weapons that allowed them to continue waging their campaign of violence. The Libyan weapon shipments included semtex explosives, Romanian variants of the AK47, Mortars, Anti-aircraft weaponry and other military grade equipment (The Telegraph 2011). It was by using some of this equipment that the IRA perpetrated some devastating attacks on the British Mainland; the mortar strike on Downing street and the Bishopsgate bombing just to name a few. The unexpected IRA ceasefire in August 31st 1994 brought back hope for peace throughout Northern Ireland, with the announcement being met with celebrations in the Catholic neighborhoods of Belfast and Londonderry (BBC 1994). The years of peace negotiation that followed were instrumental in the establishment of the Good Friday Agreement and will be discussed further in the following chapters.

Literature Review:

The literature relevant to my thesis encompasses a series of different disciplines worth taking into consideration; since the core of my argument consists of an analysis of both the educational system and language policy, relevant research from the fields of education studies, social psychology, political science and sociolinguistics will be utilized. The research regarding the above mentioned aspects of Northern Irish politics will be done within a theoretical framework firmly based in political science. This framework is, as previously mentioned, centered on power sharing in multi-ethnic societies. By taking into consideration both Consociational and integrationist theory of power sharing and conflict resolution, I will be providing a theoretical insight into political developments all while contributing to the academic debate. The goal is to adopt a wide array of literature from a variety of disciplines in order to enrich and critically assess the existing political science theoretical ideas in the context of the Good Friday Agreement.

For the numerous historical information and references I will be using throughout my thesis, I will utilize a variety of well reputed sources in order to ensure the relative objectivity of historical accounts. The book *Making sense of the Troubles* (2001) by Journalist David McKittrick and Historian David McVea provides a precise historical account of the conflict by covering the full chronological period and including a variety of interviews and publications from both sides. The book also includes a variety of relevant statistical data both prior to and after the Good Friday Agreement. In addition to the book, the *Conflict Archive on the Internet* (CAIN) by Ulster University provides a series of historical accounts and academic research on the topic of the Northern Irish conflict. The contribution by authors from different sectarian backgrounds to the CAIN archives also ensures a less biased take on historical accounts. In terms of primary sources, a variety of them will be usedthroughout my thesis, particularly the official text of the *Good Friday Agreements* (1998) and the later *St Andrews agreement* (2006) that was meant to address some shortcomings of the official 1998 document. Other official publications like the Irish and British constitution will be relevant in the context of the discussion, considering that a part of the GFA was conceived simply to address constitutional issues in the respective countries.

The literature surrounding conflict resolution in multi-ethnic societies is quite vast and largely inconsistent; severe fragmentation persists in terms of schools of thought and competing theoretical explanations. In the context of democratic societies, two competing views remain most dominant; namely Consociationalism and Integrationism. It is also important to acknowledge that, in the various literature studied in the context of this thesis, terminology referring to the Integrationist/Consociational framework is often incoherent; a variety of terms are being used to describe each particular phenomenon. Integrationism is also referred to as civil society power-sharing or social transformation and Consociatonalism is sometimes referred to as "accommodation" or "segregationism". In the context of some academic texts, Consociationalism is simply used to describe power-sharing in democratic societies as a whole. Despite these facts, in many articles including this thesis, it will be used to refer to a specific type of power-sharing that will be more thoroughly analyzed at a later stage.

In the case of Consociationalism, scholars like Arend Lijphart with his book *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (1977) form the cornerstone of consociational theory along with John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary. Their political analysis of the Northern Irish

conflict titled *Consociational theory, Northern Ireland Conflict and its Agreement* (2006) provides a very well rounded insight into the theoretical debate surrounding the Northern Irish conflict and the subsequent Good Friday Agreement. Other refinements to Consociational theory with regard to the Northern Irish conflict were presented by Tilley & al in their study *Consociationalism and the Evolution of Political Cleavages in Northern Ireland* (2008), which provided a strong argument for the importance of Consociational power-sharing institutions in the de-escalation of divisive rhetoric, mostly in regards to traditionally extreme parties like the DUP and Sinn Fein. Studies like the one conducted by Gurr titled *Why Minorities rebel* (1993) provided a considerable amount of empirical validation to the theory; as observed in the context of the study, established democracies that allow for well institutionalized cultural autonomy have a reduced risk of rebellion by minority groups. This was observed across a series of more than 200 ethnic conflicts and rebellions across the globe. Similarly, in a study named *The Spending power in Federal Systems* (1998) by Watts, the author establishes another link between local government autonomy and stability, mostly in regard to the Francophone population of Quebec in Canada. Other theoretical literature such as *The Northern Ireland Conflict: Consociational engagements* (2004) by McGarry provide a deep understanding of Consociational theory applied to Northern Ireland while also highlighting the apparent shortcomings of the theory.

In terms of Integrationist theory (or Accommodation as it often referred to), a variety of academics have developed comprehensive arguments, particularly in response to the dominance of consociationalism. Donald Horowitz in his article *Northern Ireland Agreement: Clear Consociational and Risky* (2001) firmly criticizes the Consociational approach to Northern Irish conflict and argues for a more integrationist take on power-sharing across both communities. Similarly, this critical approach to Consociationalism in the context of Northern Ireland was further pursued by Political scientist Rupert Taylor in his articles *The Belfast Agreement and the Politics of Consociationalism: A Critique* (2006) and *Northern Ireland: Consociation or Social Transformation?* (2001). In both these articles, Taylor lays some of the fundamental theoretical tools and arguments in favor of Integrationism, by providing statistical evidence of an emerging Northern Irish identity (Taylor 223). Other academics like Paul Dixon in his article *Why the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland is Not Consociational* (2005) take a more radical approach in rejecting Consociational theory as inherently divisive due to the importance placed by consociationalists on segregation and separation of power. Finally, Ian Lustick in his fierce critic of Lijphart and his article Consociationalism *Lijphart, Lakatos and Consociationlism* (1997) provides further empirical evidence for an integrationist approach to conflict resolution by mentioning India as an example of a democratic state defying consotiational assumptions (Lustick 115). It is important to note that most of the theoretical literature surrounding integrationism has grown as a counter balance to consociationalism. Consociationlism has long been the most dominant paradigm in Political Science in regard to multi-ethnic democracies and the managing of large minorities within democratic states. The theoretical framework will be further analyzed in later chapters of this thesis, particularly when discussing the Good Friday Agreements. The empirical findings of other studies, particularly surrounding the educational system and linguistic policies, will be used to engage the theoretical framework critically and contribute to a better understanding of the Northern Irish case.

Since great emphasis will be placed on the educational system in Northern Ireland particularly with regard to integrated education, a wide array of academic texts will be taken into consideration. An article by Claire McGlynn & al titled *Moving out of conflict: the contribution of*

integrated schools in Northern Ireland (2007) provides a concise review of the academic evidence in favor of integrated education. Through the analysis of numerous data sets, the article provides a firm argument in favor of integrated education and its potential in promoting the peace and reconciliation between the two communities. Similarly, a study conducted by Stringer & al titled *Intergroup contact, friendship quality and political attitudes* (2009) provides further statistical evidence in favor of integrated schooling. In a sample of more than 1700 children from a variety of educational and ethnic backgrounds, the study found a strong correlation between integrated education, long term cross communal friendships and moderate political views (Stringer & al 252, 253). In the study *Conflict, Contact and Education in Northern Ireland* (2005) by Niens & Cairns Conflict, cross community contact is once again documented to be a positive force for reconciliation. This particular text also provides a framework to approach cross-community contact through the educational system, by setting up the appropriate structures to ensure its effectiveness. Other academic texts (Cassidy & Trew 1998; Tajfel 1982) in the field of social psychology, particularly using Social Identity Theory (SIT), provide evidence of shifting identities that can be encouraged through integrated education, thus bridging the gap between the traditional Catholic-Protestant dichotomies. Other relevant academic research will be presented in the context of chapter 2 (McGlynn 2003; Montgomery & al 2003) and will be linked to the overall peace process and theoretical framework. In addition to the wide array of academic literature, some non-peer reviewed research by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Department of Education for Northern Ireland can be of relevance in the discussion surrounding integrated education. The report *Education Reform in Northern Ireland* (2013) provides a clear overview of both statistics and opinion polls in addition to the challenges faced by the government in implementing education policy. Sources of data provided by government bodies such as the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency are also particularly relevant when discussing issues of education.

In the case of Chapter 3 that focuses on the Irish Language and the prospect of linguistic integration in Northern Ireland, much of the literature explored stems from the Official Language Acts implemented in both the Republic of Ireland and Scotland. Considering the similarities in terms of number of speakers, they provide a good basis to assess the recent linguistic legislation proposed by Sinn Fein. An article by Walsh & McLeod on *Language legislation and language revitalization in Ireland and Scotland* (2006) underlines the difficulties in enforcing bilingualism, particularly in terms of recruiting bilingual civil servants and acquiring funding. Similarly, a case study conducted by Walsh on *Irish language policy and language governance* (2012) documents a series of challenges, particularly in implementing the act. The limited number of Irish language speakers in addition to budget limitation have all been identified as major issues in the revitalization process imitated by the government (Walsh 339). In the context of Northern Ireland, a study by Chriost on *Planning issues for Irish language policy* (2010) provides a detailed analysis of the data available on the Irish speaking community and proposes a framework for linguistic integration based on the Welsh Mentrau Iaith and how this could impact the development of a northern Irish identity. Additionally, an article Sarah McMonagle presents an additional integrationist argument for the broadening of the linguistic framework in hopes of stimulating a shift in group attitudes and identity building. The report on *Attitudes towards the Irish language on the island of Ireland* (2010) by Darmody & Daly provides an overview of surveys and public opinion regarding the Irish language on both sides of the border. In terms of non-academic sources, I will be extracting data on Irish speakers from both the Irish central statistics office and the Statistics agency of Northern Ireland. In addition to that, the study of official publications by Northern Irish authorities and institutions can provide an image of the aspirations and limits of linguistic

integration. The later part of the chapter will incorporate primary sources from the March 2017 Stormont Assembly elections in order to reflect on the position of the Irish language in the campaign and wider sociopolitical context.

Methodology:

Despite the qualitative nature of my research and its focus on Northern Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement, I will be briefly using case studies and academic research from relevant topics and disciplines regardless of geographical location. Case studies such as the impact of Scottish Gaelic language policy in Scotland can provide a point of comparison when discussing similar cases like the one of the Irish language in Northern Ireland. In order to solidify my arguments, I will be using a variety of sources ranging from primary sources such as government publications on language and education policy to secondary peer reviewed literature and newspaper articles. Political party manifestos, ads and political debates also constitute relevant sources of information in this context. My research methods are thus primarily a review of existing literature as well as a data analysis of different indices from the sectors of education and language. Additionally, I will be using data extracted from official surveys on different issues in order to incorporate public opinion into my arguments. Despite my genuine wish to conduct a survey personally in order to extract relevant information, the time constraints considerably limit the likelihood of acquiring a representative sample that would allow me to construct a robust argument. Considering the academic literature I will be using will not be confined to theoretical literature from the fields of political science and international relations, I will be carefully interpreting literature which I can comprehend and that is not too technically complex for me to understand. Despite my lack of formal training in fields such as social psychology and sociolinguistics, I will only be utilizing literature I can clearly understand in order to not misrepresent the views of the authors.

Chapter 1: The Good Friday Agreements and theory of power-sharing

The Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland was not, by any means, solely the result of the recent negotiations; it was the result of a peace process that spanned across almost the entirety of the conflict itself. From the collapse of the Sunningdale in agreement 1974 and the signing of the Anglo Irish accords in 1984, all the way up to the presidency of Tony Blair and the active participation of the Clinton administration, the actors involved were numerous. The resulting text that was brought forward in April 1998 encompassed a series of historical lessons and proved to be a particularly interesting case study for academics of Peace studies and political science. Its unexpected success prompted the surprise of academics and politicians alike, with political scientist Donald Horowitz stating Northern Ireland as a particularly "exceptional case" (Horowitz 197). In the referendum on the implementation of the agreement that took place in May 1998, 81% of Northern Irish voters and 95% of voters in the Republic of Ireland had endorsed the agreement (ARK 2002). This breakthrough also allowed for constitutional reform in both the UK and the Republic of Ireland, with each respective constitution being modified as to encompass the principle of consent. The article 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution had long been interpreted by Unionists as a breach of British sovereignty since they explicitly mentioned the entire island of Ireland as rightful territory of the Republic, pending to be reunified (Irish Constitution 1949).

The result that was perhaps most notable about the negotiations and subsequent agreement was that the political wings of the two largest paramilitary groups, Sinn Fein for the IRA and the Ulster Democratic Party for the UDA, had effectively contributed to the creation of a workable peace strategy without being excluded from the negotiations. This approach was in direct contradiction to the Sunningdale agreements in 1974 that had effectively excluded paramilitary groups from the negotiations. Back then, by only including moderate parties from each side like the SDLP and the UUP, the more extreme elements effectively brought about the collapse of the power-sharing agreement (Horowitz 219). During the GFA negotiations, the parties had opted for the inclusion of extreme elements in order to reach a broader consensus. This method was pioneered by the Clinton administration and Senator George Mitchell in particular, who was tasked with mediating the negotiations (BBC 1998). The most crucial part of the negotiation came in the form of a great concession by the Sinn Fein leadership, which up until that point was reluctant to accept any proposal that did not include a United Ireland (The Guardian 1998). In a political "sleight of hand", Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness had effectively reversed party policy to accommodate the new reality of the upcoming agreement. The agreement was itself based on the idea of majority consent, which effectively paved the only road to Irish reunification in the form of a referendum and thus by the endorsement of the majority of the people in Northern Ireland (Good Friday Agreement 1998).

The theoretical interpretation of the agreement is far from straightforward and has been the subject of heated debate. Nevertheless, its basic structure, as I will argue, bears some resemblance to the model presented by mainstream consociational theory. The two competing theories, namely consociationalism and integrationistm, hold very different approaches in regard to solving ethno-religious conflicts like the one in Northern Ireland. Consociationalist power sharing is based on a more pessimistic view of divided societies, in which a well-established power sharing

system that minimizes contact between the two communities and maintains relative peace in a social structure of competing identities (McGarry & O'Leary 254). Northern Ireland is treated as a bi-national state in which the two conflicting identities are both salient and resistant to change (Hughes 3). The basic framework provided by consociationlists as the "guide book" for power sharing in plural societies boils down to 4 main elements (McGarry & O'Leary 44; Dixon 359; Horowitz 194):

(a) Power Sharing Executive: Ensures that executive power at all levels is shared proportionally between the main communities.
(b) Autonomy: Ensures that each community maintains a set level of autonomy that can include territorial autonomy (in the case of federations) or cultural autonomy through separate social institutions.
(c) Grand coalition: Ensures a consensus among the largest political actors in order to ensure support for power sharing across communities.
(d) Mutual veto: Ensures that each community can protect its vital interests in the political arena.

The consotitational theoretical prescription of "Autonomy" will be the one of the main theoretical arguments which will receive further scrutiny in the following chapters; the notion of cultural autonomy is entrenched in consotiational theory and includes both linguistic and educational segregation. An additional aspect of the theory which will also provide a basis for discussion is the assumption that identities, especially in regions with antagonistic ethnic conflicts, are monolithic and inherently divisive. In consotiational terms, segregated power-sharing is the endgame of ethnic conflict, in that it perpetually suppresses antagonistic forces that endanger peace by allowing for relative autonomy and minimization of contact.

When discussing integrationism in the case of Northern Ireland, it is important to acknowledge that a series of different approaches exist. Considering that integrationism is predicated on the assumptions that identities are fluid and subject to change, the framework and circumstances under which this change can occur is subject to question (Rupert 37). Three distinct forms of integrationism can be identified in the case of Northern Ireland (McGarry & O'Leary 250, 251):

(1) Irish inegrationism: Republicans that reject the Agreement in hopes of diluting and integrating the Unionist identity in the Irish Nation State.

(2) British integrationism: Unionists that reject the Agreement as they firmly believe that the Catholic identity can be accommodated in the British nation-state without the need for power sharing institutions.

(3) Power-sharing integrationism: The concept of integrating both the British and Irish identity under Northern Ireland with the creation of a distinct but inclusive Northern Irish identity.

In the context of this thesis, the form of integrationism that I will be mostly referring to is that of power-sharing. Nevertheless, I will occasionally mention the Irish variant of integrationism as often referred to by Sinn Fein politicians. As advocated by numerous scholars, the power-sharing variant of integrationism presented for the case of Northern Ireland, is aimed at the creation of a cross-communal form of civil nationalism aimed at tuning down rival ethno-religious identities that are perceived as the root of the conflict (Taylor 47). In this specific context, power-sharing is seen as a

means for achieving further social integration and permanently erasing the root of the conflict. Integrationionalists seek to exploit the stability offered by power-sharing in order to encourage cross community contact and bring about a more homogenous identity and integrated society (Dixon 365; Taylor 48). This theoretical framework also entails overtly different policy prescriptions when it comes to cultural autonomy, education and language. The gradual implementation of an integrated educational system for all Northern Irish citizens has long been advocated by integrationists. The Alliance party, the largest bi-communal party, clearly states that integrated education is a "key part" of its policy proposals (Alliance 2017). Integrationist scholars also tend to advocate for the replacement of Proportional representation (STV) in favor of Alternative Vote (AV) which involves preferential voting to ensure majority support in single member districts (McGarry & O'Leary 253; Horowitz 196). This is done in hopes of encouraging politicians to reach outside their communal group for votes in addition to keeping small hard-line parties out of the executive by raising the threshold. Unlike Consociationalism, the institutional proposals of integrationist theory remain rather vague; these mostly amount to the willingness of integrating social, political and cultural life in hopes of creating a common identity as a way to achieve durable peace.

Due to the ambiguity of integrationism when it comes to preferred institutions, the interpretation of the agreement has been diverse and contradictory among scholars. Overall, the agreement bears great resemblance to the institutional requirements set by consociationalists: the executive is elected with a system of Proportional Representation (STV) and is organized in a bi-communal fashion, with Members of the assembly registering their respective allegiance (either Nationalist, Unionist or other)(Good Friday Agreement 1998). In addition to the notion of proportionality, the agreement's system of parallel consent for key decisions could be logically interpreted as a veto system. On Strand One article 5 of the Good Friday Agreement, it is stated that for key decisions, legislation needs to be passed with either weighted majority or parallel consent (Good Friday Agreement 1998). Weighted majority imposes a 60% majority vote in addition to at least 40% positive votes from each community. Parallel consent ensures an overall majority (50%) in addition to a majority in each community. This ensures that each community can simply block decisions if these prove to be too polarizing or disadvantageous. When it comes to the argument of Grand Coalition, interpretation is more ambiguous. Although all major parties that are represented in Stormont take part in the executive and comply with the principles of the GFA, there has been a history of non-compliance and boycott by the DUP, a major unionist party. Finally, the lack of clear measures regarding cultural, educational or linguistic autonomy form a divergence in terms of interpretation; the agreement does not explicitly mention what steps should be taken in terms of educational or linguistic policy. On strand three, under the chapter on Economic, cultural and social issues, the government of the United Kingdom pledges to "take resolute action to promote the Irish language" and "seek to remove barriers that could work against the maintenance of the language" (Good Friday Agreement 1998). In clause 15 of the St Andrews Agreement, there was a further pledge by the British government to "enhance and protect" the Irish language (St Andrews Agreement 2006). Despite the guarantees for promotion of the Irish language, there is a lack of descriptive institutional proposals as to how this should be achieved. Sinn Fein has long interpreted these as an amendment for fully fledged linguistic integration in Northern Ireland, with Irish having equal status to that of English and allow it to be used in courts, parliament and the civil service. Under the current system, the promotion of the Irish language is done by a series of autonomous or government funded organizations, largely controlled by the catholic community. In that regard, the catholic community retains relative autonomy over the

promotion and the teaching of the Irish language in schools. In terms of educational reform, the agreement does not explicitly mention anything other than a vague statement for "the promotion of integrated education" (Good Friday Agreement 1998). This has allowed for the maintaining of a segregated educational system, in which each community remains firmly in control of its respective schools: 87% of Catholics and 79% of Protestant pupils attend their respective sectarian schools (Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education 2013). The absence of institutions dictating educational and linguistic structures has led to a segregated system resembling those advocated by consotiationalists. Nevertheless, this relative ambiguity also leaves room for a more nuanced theoretical approach, particularly when it comes to education and language. Interpreting the agreements along more integrationist lines when it comes to education is, as I will argue, a constructive way of consolidating peace. In the following chapter, I will be endeavoring into an analysis of the integrated schooling system and how the compiled academic evidence reinforces the integrationist argument regarding education and identity.

Chapter 2: Integrated education in Northern Ireland: a tool for consolidating peace?

Prior to the establishment of integrated education, schooling only operated in in a segregated fashion: despite the willingness of Unionist Protestants to create a single educational system after the establishment of Northern Ireland, fierce opposition from the Catholic Church and Irish republicans led to a divided system. It was instead decided that three types of schools would be allowed: controlled, maintained and voluntary (CAIN History of Education). Each type of school was more or less government controlled, with funding fluctuating accordingly; Voluntary Catholic schools were initially deprived of crucial funding since the Catholic Church had boycotted the Lynn committee tasked with setting up the educational system (CAIN History of Education). The subsequent reforms, particularly the 1947 Education act, allowed for Catholic schools to be maintained and managed by a body of designated members of the catholic community, providing relative autonomy (Northern Ireland education act 1947)

Integrated schooling has been part of the Northern Irish educational system since 1978, when a motion passed was by the British government in order to "facilitate the creation of Northern Irish schools likely to be attended by pupils of different religious and cultural backgrounds" (Northern Ireland education act 1978). This reform provided a framework for joint cross-communal management of schools and a curriculum encompassing broader Christian values and more common patterns of history and culture (Northern Ireland education act 1978). Despite the presence of the legal framework, most churches opted out of establishing integrated schools, with the first being inaugurated only in 1981. Later legal refinements allowed for already established catholic maintained or Controlled schools to obtain integrated status, particularly after the 1989 education act (Controlled schools adhere directly to the educational authority and are attended almost exclusively by protestants pupils. In 2016 only 4.3% of Controlled secondary school pupils

were registered Catholics). In 1987, the Northern Ireland council for Integrated Education was established in hope of coordinating the newly founded integrated schools and promoting the creation of new schools. Nevertheless, the level of integrated education has remained limited ever since, with around 90% of pupils being educated separately. The school system in Northern Ireland is, due to the sectarian division, composed of many distinct types of schools that are managed by different actors (Department of Education 2017):

(a) Controlled schools: As mentioned previously, controlled schools are primarily attended to by Protestant pupils and managed by the board of Governors that operates under the Education Authority (EA). The Controlled School's support Council (CSSC) is a non-statutory organ tasked with supporting and representing controlled schools.

(b) Maintained schools: Are led by a school board of Governors accountable to the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS). The CCMS effectively leads and coordinates maintained schools but is funded by the Department of Education.

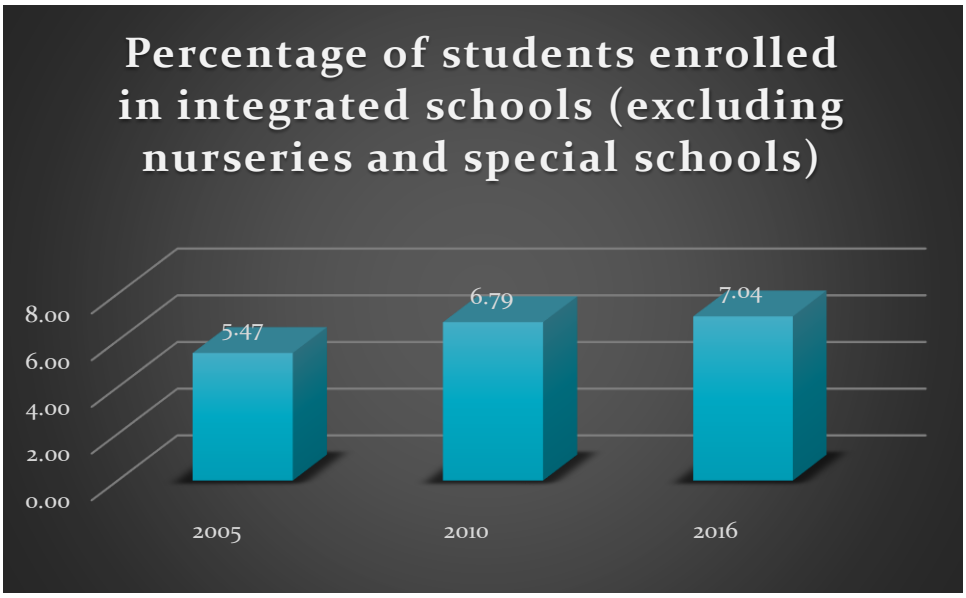
(c) Voluntary grammar schools: These include schools that operate independently and are accountable to their Board of Governors. The percentage of government funding is determined by the management structures of the school.

(d) Integrated schools: operate in a bi-communal fashion and has a Board of Governors composed of parent representatives, teachers and Department of Education staff. Controlled schools can earn integrated status if a certain sectarian ratio of pupils and board members is respected. Integrated schools can differ depending on the administration.

(e) Irish medium schools: provide education in the Irish language and are funded by the Department of Education.

The sheer complexity of the current system is, to a certain extent, a legacy of the deep societal divisions. The overtime statistical trends offers an interesting overview regarding the level of segregation in education. From 2005 to 2016, the percentage of students enrolled in integrated primary and post primary schools has increased by only 1.57 %, from 5.47% in to 7.04% (See figure 2). Despite the apparent divisions, the experiment of integrated education in Northern Ireland has been the subject of intensive research. A parallel understanding of Northern Irish public opinion through opinion polls and existing research on integrated education provides a strong argument for integrationism; increasing the number of pupils in integrated schools is both feasible due to growing popular support but also empirically proven to benefit the peace process. Within the framework of the Good Friday Agreement, education can be reformed along integrationist lines and have a lasting impact.

Figure 2:



Data: Department of education

The argument for integrated education presupposes the validity of the integrationist assumption regarding the fluidity of social identity. If social identity cannot be shifted through education and contact with the "rival" group, there would be little motivation to challenge the status quo. This point of view is often expressed by consociationalists who argue that identities in deeply divided societies are monolithic and that, in case further integeration, these identities are more likely to clash than they are to accommodate difference (Hughes 3). This alternative is often presented as one that is more realistic to the one offered by integrationists. The question of identity is one that has been thoroughly debated in the case of Northern Ireland, particularly with the addition of identity related questions in the 2011 population census. According to the census, 29.44 percent of the total population identifies as "Northern Irish"; at first glance, this suggests the emergence of a new post conflict identity (Census Northern Ireland 2011). Nevertheless, the limited amount of data extracted regarding identity prior to the 2011 census does not leave room for much interpretation. Two more surveys that were undertaken in 2003 and 2004 showed that around 23% of the population identified as Northern Irish (NILT 2003-2004). Nonetheless, the lack of clear overtime trend makes it difficult to draw conclusions: the meaning of a "Northern Irish" identity is ambiguous. A study published by Todd in 2006 that presented a series of questionnaires and interviews on questions of identity further underlines this feeling of ambiguity; the respondents often referred to "northern Ireland" without a capital "N", which would suggest that they identify simply as Irish from the North (Todd 15). Additionally, a series of interviews conducted in the context of the research showed that the term "Northern Irish" was being used a "politically safe" term (Todd 18). Although an identity shift in broader society has been hard to pin down, the educational context provides some more conclusive evidence regarding more accommodative identities and attitudes particularly through integrated education.

A crucial point lies in understanding the causal relation between negative intergroup attitudes and institutions: Integrationists claim that the perpetual institutional segregation is accentuating division (Dixon 336) while consociationalists claim that these attitudes are merely the result of the conflict and that institutions are necessary to avoid large scale violence (McGarry & O'Leary 276). The educational system and particularly the experiment of integrated education in Northern Ireland provides an observable microcosm of this theoretical clash. I will now proceed by reviewing a wide array of academic research and data exploring the link between social identity, inter-communal attitude and education in Northern Ireland.

Early research from the 70s initially established a link between educational segregation and mutual distrust. In the four districts analyzed, teachers expressed grave concern regarding the absence of inter-communal cooperation in schooling and the potential perpetuation of hostile communal attitudes (Darby & all 1977). The major polls done among past pupils of integrated schools provide a clear image of the impact of inter-group contact on social attitudes. Despite considering family influences as more important in terms of identity, most of the students who had not experienced contact with the other community prior to integrated education were consistently ranked among the most influenced and enlightened by the experience of integrated education (McGlynn 153). 93% of the students surveyed stated that integrated education had a positive impact on their lives through generating respect for diversity and security when around members of the other community (McGlynn 153). Another strong indicator lies in the percentage of students able to hold mixed friendships, which went from 41 % prior to integrated education to 67%: in a context of segregated housing, the maintenance of such friendships is a considerable challenge (McGlynn 153). This tendency of cross-communal long–term friendships was also reflected in the choice of partner, with more than 50% of surveyed integrated school students having a partner of different background. The constraining role that the wider community plays in terms of cross-group contact cannot be understated. As the previous study suggests, the school platform could work as a substitute to encourage stable cross-communal links. Many of these findings were replicated in a later study that, once again found a correlation between integrated education and long term cross-communal friendships (Stringer & al 252). An additional observation was made in terms of the moderation of political views for integrated school attendees; greater moderation in terms of political convictions can go a long way in establishing a more stable peace. In addition to that, a 2007 study by Hayes & al established a correlation between integrated school attendance and Northern Irish identity. In a sample of integrated school attendees, 24.1 % of Protestants and 29.5% of Catholics were identifying as Northern Irish, compared to only 15% and 24% for individuals that attended segregated schools (Hayes 470). Political affiliation was also more moderate for integrated school attendees with 43.2% of Protestants and 41.5% of Catholics not registering as either Unionist or Nationalist compared to 30.6% and 32.6% for their non-integrated schooled counterparts (Hayes 470). Although the fluctuations are relatively limited, the existence of a correlation between integrated schooling and relative political moderation in two sets of data could be reflective of a more tolerant group.

In parallel to the increasingly overwhelming evidence of a causal link between integrated schooling, moderate attitudes and cross-communal links, public opinion in Northern Ireland has been consistently voicing its support for integrated education. According to a series of surveys, the majority of Northern Irish citizens strongly support more mixed schooling; two polls done in 1999 and 2003 by the NILT found that a large majority of interviewees (74% and 73% for each year respectively) were for the promotion of integrated education (NILT 1999-2003). Similarly, in a 2013 poll, more than 55% of respondents expressed agreement to the statement "The Northern Ireland executive should set a date for the complete desegregation of our school system" (IEF 2013). Even when the respondents were asked if they agreed with the statement "Northern Ireland's segregated educational system perpetuates division in our society" the percentage of agreement was of 63%.

The average number of pupils per class is also reflective of the demand and need for more integrated schooling; grand maintained integrated schools hold the highest number of average pupils at 27 per classroom, 2 pupils over the national average of 25 (Department of Education Statistical Bulletin 2017).

Nonetheless, this apparent willingness for integrated education has not led to any significant increase in numbers of integrated school attendees (See figure 2). Despite the academic evidence pointing decisively towards the importance of children being educated in a bi-sectarian environment, severe political disagreements has been standing in the way of a flourishing integrated school system. The recent political material published for the March 2017 Assembly election provides an overview of the issues obstructing more effective schooling integration. As previously mentioned, the integrated schooling sector is diverse and does not adhere to a set framework. The only requirements set are for an approximately equal number of enrolments from Protestant and Catholic pupils and a board of Governors reflective of the ethnic ratio (NICIE Integrated Education). Consequently, there can be severe discrepancies in terms of modes of operation and curricula; some school tend to operate in more secular fashion while others choose to highlight religious elements, predominantly of the Christian faith (NICIE Integrated Education). Although all schools must adhere to the statutory curriculum, relative flexibility remains, with the ability for schools to teach Irish optionally or underline particular traditions of their choice. The 2016 Shared education act did push for further mixing of schools and reflected an overall political willingness for integration. Despite that fact, the bill remained very vague, reflecting an apparent difficulty for political parties to agree on a common set of policies. Although most political parties consent to the principle of integrating the educational system, many disagree on how this should be achieved. The bill did not go deeper than a mere encouragement of mixed education as a whole and a slight increase in the funds allocated (Shared Education Act 2016). This ideological rift is apparent in the Sinn Fein policy proposals, who has been calling for an "Irish style" educational system. The official party policy on integrated education has been to endorse multi-denominational schools all while pushing for a change in the school curriculum with hopes of integrating Northern Ireland into an all-Ireland school system (Sinn Fein 2017). Unsurprisingly, Sinn Fein's official line is to gradually integrate to the Republic of Ireland's school system; party policy adheres to the notion of Irish Integrationism that was discussed in chapter 2. There has been a deliberate push for the teaching of Irish history and the "promotion of our common Irishness". Sinn Fein's main objection stems from the common held conviction that the educational system, in its current form, is unnaturally enforcing a sense of "Britishness" onto Northern Ireland's youth (Sinn Fein 2017). Other main parties such as the DUP, SDLP and Alliance do not approach integrated education with such skepticism; none of the above mentioned parties campaigned for the change in school curriculum and all are in favor of integrated education (Democratic Unionist Party 2017; Social Democratic and Labor Party 2017; Alliance Party 2017). Such a split along ideological lines can indeed be an impediment to educational integration. Nevertheless, regardless of curriculum reform, the willingness of parties and citizens to have Northern Irish youth be educated in a more integrated fashion needs to be exploited. As the previously mentioned research demonstrates, the impact of bi-communal schooling on attitudes, political views and even identity should not be underestimated.

The findings regarding the impact of integrated schooling in Northern Ireland seem to contradict, at least partly, the consociational assumption of perpetually clashing and mutually unaccommodating identities. The research conducted in the field of social psychology, particularly regarding the impact of integrated schooling on Northern Irish pupils, should be taken into account by political scientists when discussing prospects of social integration. It is undoubtedly true that segregation and polarization persist and that the level of integration achievable in the near future needs to remain realistic: according to the 2011 census, about 90% of social housing

estates still hold at least 80% of one communal group (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency 2011). It is nevertheless important to accommodate integrationist principles regarding the possibility for identities to be shaped through cross-communal contact and education. The growing popular support for mixed education in addition to a considerable portion of the public voicing its conviction that segregated education vitiates and divides Northern Irish society is somewhat contradictory to consotiational theory. Under these assumption, any cross-communal contact is more likely to create conflict than it is to create moderation and, with experimental evidence mounting, it is perhaps time for consotiationalists to rethink their assumptions on culture and identity. In the context of Northern Ireland, the importance placed on cultural autonomy and thus communal control over integrated education has been considerably overstated. Although a complete integration of the educational system is implausible due to ideological divides between the major parties, the promotion of integrated schooling within the current legal and institutional framework is more than likely to constructively contribute to the peace process. Despite the inconclusive evidence surrounding the possibility of an integrated school system contributing to the creation of a post-conflict Northern Irish identity, a shift towards more inclusive attitudes is likely to occur, particularly through the maintenance of cross-communal friendships. The endorsement of integrated education in the Good Friday Agreement can, despite its vague nature, be a basis for further integration. Under article 1 of the Good Friday Agreement's Anglo-Irish treaty, the right of each citizen to identify as they choose, to hold both Irish and British citizenship and live on either side of the border is constitutionally guaranteed (Good Friday Agreement 1998). The emergence of a mixed Northern Irish identity is therefore constitutionally protected from political encroachment, regardless of its likelihood of development. Overall, it is hard to deny that the consociational principles of proportionality and mutual veto have been both crucial in the case of Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, under the relative stability provided by the power sharing agreement it is important to acknowledge the potential for solidifying peace is present in the initiative of integrated education. The continued emphasis by consociationalists on cultural autonomy as a means of avoiding inter-communal tensions needs to be further nuanced. As I have clearly demonstrated, integrated education is, in the case of Northern Ireland, a key factor in establishing long term peace and a strong argument in favor of integrationism.

Chapter 3: Irish language Policy, identity and the limits social integration:

The relative achievability and effectiveness of educational integration primarily stems from the fact that it is relatively uncontroversial, as seen in the previous figures. In contrast to integrated education that generally enjoys widespread support, the further integration of the Irish language in the Northern Irish state is particularly polarizing and vitiating to political discourse. Any discussion regarding reform or refinement of the Good Friday Agreement along integrationist lines ought to address the issue of linguistic policy and the Irish Language. As I will argue in this last chapter, the Irish language presents a crucial challenge to the integrationist framework that has often not been properly addressed. The argument put forward by some academics claiming that the Irish language is increasingly transcending religious boundaries and integrating into greater society (Malcolm 2009; Chriost 122) has been mildly inaccurate, particularly following the 2011 Census data. In order build a stable peace process and encourage social integration, academics and policy makers alike need to acknowledge challenges and shortcoming in order to remain realistic about what can be achieved. As I will attempt demonstrate, the political and social friction created around the Irish language in Northern Ireland clearly underlines the limits of integrationist theory and remains a major political issue that is best addressed by a more institutionally nuanced approach.

A brief look at the history of the Irish Language provides some important tools to understand recent developments and why the language has been so inherently linked to the Irish identity. Despite Irish remaining a majority language on the island up until the early 1800, a series of policies instituted by the British authorities such as the banning of Irish language classes at schools had considerably reduced the overall number of speakers. The Great Famine that took place in the 19th century disproportionally affected Irish native speakers, essentially causing the endangerment of the Irish language (Falc'Her-Poyroux 12). Additionally, the subsequent waves of emigration further decreased the number of speakers; official 1851 figures show a net 1.5 million Irish speakers having emigrated in the past 10 years (Falc'Her-Poyroux 2). With the rise of Irish Nationalism and with the survival of the language in jeopardy, the movement known as the Gaelic Revival spread through the Irish intellectual elite and gained traction in the general population. Ever since, the Irish language has become a highly emotionalized symbol of Irish nationalism; the lack of native speakers meant that there was little practical use in adopting the language and thus the revival of the language was primarily founded on a nationalist agenda. This made the Irish language a deeply politicized issue which directly impacted its development and historic position in the Northern Irish state. Ever since the establishment of Northern Ireland, Irish was perceived as a symbol of Irish separatism and thus a threat to British Unionism; as mentioned during the chapter on education, public funding for Catholic schools teaching Irish was practically ceased. The historical developments during the Troubles further added to the historical tensions, with many of the interned Republican paramilitaries learning Irish during their time in prison as a symbol of dedication to the cause (BBC 2014). Among them was Republican leader Gerry Adams who still holds great power in the Irish political scene. The major breakthrough in the recognition of Irish as a minority language and the allocation of funds to its preservation came under the Good Friday Agreement which provided legal backing to the long held demands of nationalists. Although the Agreement did not provide concrete policy proposals regarding the integration of the Irish language in the State, it did pledge for the promotion of the language (Good Friday Agreement 1998). Some of the more concrete policy proposals included: the facilitation of Irish medium education, providing autonomy and recognition to the Irish Language community by ensuring their representation in the public authorities and the availability of Teilifis na Gaeilige (an Irish language TV channel operating in the Republic) (Good Friday Agreement 1998). Nevertheless, the

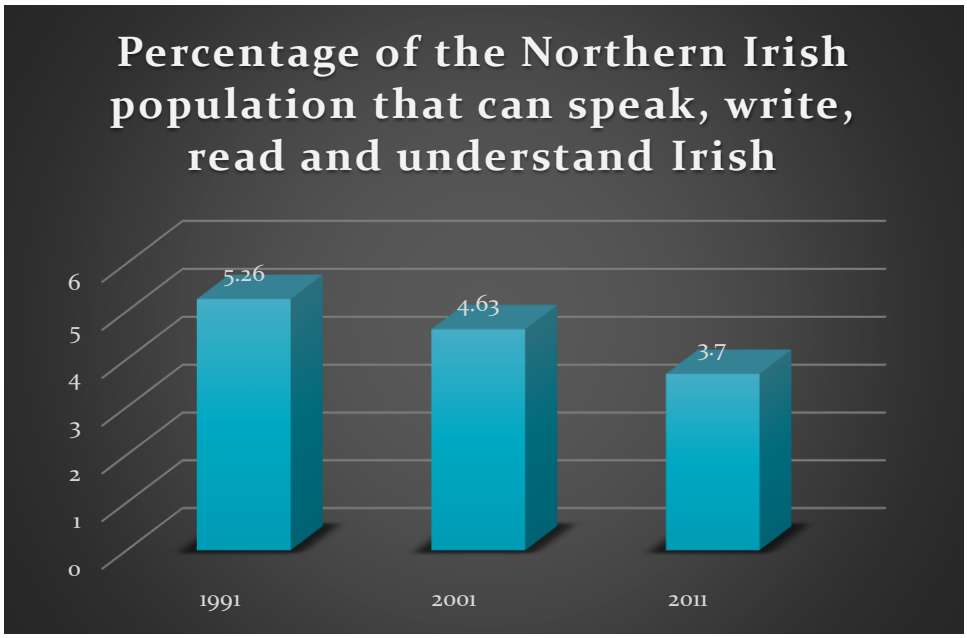
institutional framework was quite vague and, upon being revisited in 2006 under the St Andrews Agreement, remained a major source of resentment; many senior Republicans still argue that the Good Friday and St Andrews Agreement guaranteed the establishment of Irish as an official language. On the other hand, Unionists interpreted the current constitutional pledge as a mere promotion of the language at the local government level (Belfast Telegraph 2017). Unlike for the case of education, the cultural autonomy granted to the local Irish language communities has been a positive force in the peace process by alleviating tension. As the evidence suggests, pushing for a full integration of Irish is unlikely to yield a considerable change in the number of speakers or indeed lead to a shift in Protestant perceptions and identity. Incorporating findings from other Official language acts in Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland is essential in exploring all the overlapping dimension and repercussion of such a political decision.

Just like in the case of education, two different variants of integration are brought forward: the interpretation brought forward by Sinn Fein is once again reflective of its nationalist integrationist tendencies. In its official manifesto, Sinn Fein clearly states its willingness to create a bilingual society on the whole of the island of Ireland (Sinn Fein 2017). Nonsectarian parties like Alliance, although partly supporting the Irish language act, do it for very different reasons; as power sharing integrationists, they express their support in hopes of expanding the social platform and "promoting common cultural heritage" (Alliance 2017). By stressing the need to include every member of the community, there has been a considerable attempt to de-politicize the issue in hopes of creating a wider and more inclusive Northern Irish identity (Alliance 2017). This view is held by some of integrationist scholars that see the further integration of the Irish language as an opportunity for more Catholics to identify with the state and thus form a stronger and more inclusive identity (Chriost 311; Chriost 122; Woods 1998; Malcolm 2009). Nevertheless, these assumptions can hardly withstand empirical scrutiny, particularly after the 2011 census and the apparent shrinking of Irish speakers. Any large scale language act needs to gather considerable popular support and convince Northern Irish citizens, particularly Protestants, that such a decisions is useful and worth the expenditure. The DUP's position on the Irish language act prior to the March 2017 elections is reflective of this; Arlene Foster, leader of the DUP, stated that a Polish language act would make more sense since more people in Northern Ireland speak Polish (Belfast Telegraph 2017). Regardless of future legislation, it is likely that even if such an act is implemented, there would be a major backlash from the Protestant community, a turn of events that would be detrimental to the peace process.

The trend in terms of the number of Irish language speakers in Northern Ireland has been steadily decreasing throughout the past 30 years; the percentage of citizens able to speak, write, read and understand Irish has dwindled. The percentage went from 5.26% of the total population in 1991 down to 3.7% in 2011 (See figure 3). Even when including individuals with partial knowledge of the Irish Language, the figures remain very low: the percentage of citizens with no knowledge of the Irish language has actually increased overtime, going from 87.9% in 1991 to 89% in 2011 (Northern Ireland Census 1991; Northern Ireland Census 2011). These figures are also reflected in the general population: a 2013 Irish language survey provides an overview of the attitudes towards the Irish Language in both the North and the South. Indices such as the willingness of students and parents to have Irish taught at school is reflective of the major differences that persist. In the Republic of Ireland, more than 50% of both parents and students wish to have Irish taught at school as opposed to around 17% in Northern Ireland (Darmody 74). What is perhaps worth noting is that more that almost 60% of students in the North and 40% of parents actively object to the teaching of Irish in schools, a figure that is down to 30% and 5% respectively in the Republic (Darmody 74). Similarly, in a part of the survey dedicated to the impact of government action on the Irish language, opinions are reflective of the overall skepticism of such an act in Northern

Ireland; only 32% of the total sample of the respondents deemed the offering of public services in Irish as important. The evidence gathered from the Irish language act and the Gaelic language act in Scotland present a series of challenges that would be difficult to overcome, particularly in the context of Northern Ireland. The Irish language act as currently proposed by Sinn Fein underlines the importance of the State providing a certain number of public services in Irish (Sinn Fein 2017). In both the Republic of Ireland and Scotland, this aspect was particularly problematic, especially when it came to recruiting bilingual staff (Walsh & McLeod 42). Research done specifically regarding the quality of public service provision in Galway reflected a strong criticism by Native Irish speakers in terms of the quality and standard of Irish of most civil servants (Walsh & McLeod 32). Even when it comes to language literacy levels, native Irish speakers from the Gaeltacht areas (the main Irish speaking regions in the Republic) tend to be more literate and skilled in the English language, often opting for English state documentation (Walsh & McLeod 32). The dubious quality of translations provided have also acted as an impediment to the use of the Irish language in state affairs. Another major obstacle to language integration at the level of the state is mainly rooted in the political problems created when imposing Irish language requirements to a large number of public sector positions. In the case of Wales, the barriers to employment created by the addition of Welsh language requirements have been a driver of anti-language policy resentment, particularly in areas with high unemployment (Walsh McLeod 33). The complexity of language policy and the challenges that arise when attempting to revitalize and integrate minority or endangered languages is clearly reflected in the literature. The ethno-political and historical tensions in Northern Ireland act, in this case, as a problem multiplier. The arguments presented by integrationists in terms of language policy appear non-realistic when taking into consideration the recent political developments. Some academics have stated that the current obstacle to further integration of the Irish language boils down "incomplete understanding" of the other group caused by consociational divide that accentuates segregation and obstructs a more flexible linguistic framework (McMongale 267). Such an analysis through the integrationist lens grossly underestimates the historic background and the level of divisiveness that has been centered on the Irish language. The complexity of the task at hand further adds to the challenges; similar initiatives throughout the United Kingdom have been costly both in economic and political terms, even without the political polarization present in Northern Ireland. Although linguistic diversity should be undoubtedly guaranteed, a major departure from the current framework, as laid in the Good Friday Agreement and the subsequent institutional foundations, would be potentially harmful to the peace process. The consociational principles of cultural autonomy has been, in this case, sufficient in both appeasing nationalist discontent regarding the language within the state but also ensure that the Irish language does not appear as a threat to Protestants. The existence of intergovernmental bodies such as the Foras na Gaeilge that actively promotes the Irish language in addition to the ability for students to attend Irish education provides a satisfactory level of linguistic integration. The recent electoral campaign for the March 2017 assembly elections highlights the issues and limitations of integration for the Irish language. It is crucial for academics to take into consideration political developments. In the case of Northern Ireland, political developments in the context of the March election present a sobering reminder of the limits of social integration. Despite its usefulness and theoretical relevance, it is important to acknowledge the limitations and empirical weaknesses of the framework.

Figure 3:



Data: Census Northern Ireland

The evidence of political polarization surrounding the question of the Irish language in the current political stage is omnipresent. As of June 2017, Sinn Fein has effectively ruled out entering in an executive coalition without the presence of an Irish language act. On the opposing side, the DUP has effectively refused to accept the Irish language act in its current form. It has instead advocated for the inclusion of Ulster Scots in the act, a Germanic dialect spoken by the Scottish settlers that first moved to the province of Ulster (The Guardian 2017). A debate that took place in 2015 regarding the Irish language bill as proposed by Sinn Fein led to a heated exchange regarding Sinn Fein's position regarding Irish in the public sector. Declan Kearneyone of Sinn Fein publicly defended one of the drafts presented by his party which wanted Irish speakers in Northern Ireland to be prioritized in civil service positions through an affirmative action plan (BBC 2015). The response by the DUP's Nelson McCausland as well as some audience members was highly critical and made reference to the minute number of fluent speakers and the financial strain that would be put on the Northern Irish state (BBC 2015). In December 2016, a political row between the governing parties led to a brief withdrawal of funding by the DUP of an Irish language scheme aimed at promoting the language (BBC 2016). The DUP has repeatedly accused Sinn Fein of abusing the Irish language as a cultural tool to pursue political ends (BBC 2016). Similarly, Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness accused the DUP, prior to his death in March 2017, of expressing blatant hatred towards Irish speakers (BBC 2016). Overall, the electoral campaign that took place in March 2017 greatly reflects the deep divisions that persist. The rhetoric surrounding the integration of the Irish language at the state level remains divisive and polarized and thus not a likely candidate for further social integration. The elements that obstruct the Irish language from achieving the same status as English are not just limited to the historical position of Irish as an emblem of Nationalism and the Republican movement. In the Republic of Ireland, the process of revitalizing and integrating the language was a particularly difficult and costly procedure; it is understandably challenging for unionist politicians to allow such a large public expenditure in an era of spending cuts. With the number of fluent Irish speakers at less than 3.7%, convincing the general public that such a

language act is purely practical and not motivated by Irish nationalism is an arduous task. Though well-intentioned, the argument presented by integrationists regarding the inclusion of the Irish language in the political arena rings hollow when taking into account historical and recent political developments. With the number of speakers still in downward trend, there is no empirical evidence suggesting that a language act is likely to affect the number of speakers unless the teaching of Irish becomes a mandatory part of the school system, which is nearly impossible. The decision of Arlene Foster of the DUP to thank the principal of a Grammar school in Irish is undoubtedly a source of hope for the future (BBC 2017). Nevertheless, this move should be welcomed for what it is, a pre-electoral reconciliatory move: the Irish language remains a divisive issue. Academics should remain realistic about what can be achieved in the context of a deeply divided society with conflicting identities: incorporating Irish at this current time is simply unlikely to initiate any substantial shift towards a more inclusive identity. The institutions provided by the Good Friday Agreement should be utilized to the fullest extent by ensuring that Irish speakers are represented at the government level and that funds are allocated for the promotion and preservation of their language. The principles of autonomy for cultural affairs in the case of the Irish language as presented by consociationlists is perhaps a better solution for the near future in ensuring the stability of the power-sharing agreement.

Conclusions:

The peace process in Northern Ireland has been a long uphill struggle in a battleground of opposed identities and paramilitary violence. The peace agreement devised and implemented in 1998 was both unexpected and encouraging for academics and citizens alike. 19 years after the Omagh bombing that claimed the lives of 29 civilians, the Good Friday Agreement is still holding, despite having to overcome numerous challenges and threats to its existence. Its relative success has attracted the attention of numerous academics of different backgrounds that have used it as a case study for maintaining relative peace and democracy in multi-ethnic and multi-religious states. Both Consociationalists and Integrationists have attempted to interpret the agreement and refine each theoretical approach in order to better understand the managing of conflicts in multi-ethnic states. The case of Northern Ireland underlines the importance of incorporating empirical evidence in the conduct of policy and realm of academia. As I attempted to demonstrate, the theories employed by political scientists in order to explain the peace process and power-sharing often fall short of expectations when it comes to grasping the complexity of the object of study. It is of crucial importance to perpetually refine our theoretical understandings and remain open to new empirical evidence. In the case of Northern Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement, the theoretical approach to peace is far from straightforward; the evidence gathered throughout the peace process is vast and ought to be taken into consideration. Integrated education is a strong argument in favor of integrationism: the experiment that started in the early 80s has clearly been documented to deliver positive results in terms of mutual perception and more accommodating identities. The consociational assumption that the two communities would cling own to their educational autonomy and maintain their wish to be educated separately has been shattered as public opinion

following the Good Friday Agreement has shifted. Likewise, the image of the perpetually clashing monolithic identities have been somewhat inaccurate; despite the lack of decisive evidence on the development of a Northern Irish identity, integrated education clearly affects the way students choose to identify or relate to other students. Although it would be unreasonable to expect a full educational integration in the near future, the very act of educating students in a bi-sectarian fashion has the possibility to transform Northern Irish society and solidify peace. The increased contact between the two communities has, in this case, not led to any considerable friction or clash unlike what some consociationalists predicted. Individuals that were once vicious enemies of rival paramilitary organizations are now sharing a common platform and channel their disagreement through dialogue. Nevertheless, the case of the Irish language is, in turn, a reminder of the limits of the integrationist approach and the importance of a certain level of autonomy as advocated by consociationalists. The attempt by some integrationists to use an expanded linguistic policy as a means of accommodating diversity and expanding the Northern Irish identity is, to a large extent, futile. Such an approach clearly underestimates the historical context and how politically divisive the issue actually is. Although the likelihood of such a linguistic expansion actually shifting identities is unknown and open to speculation, the overtime trend when it comes to the number of speakers is irrefutable. The Irish language in Northern Ireland has not shown any significant increase in the number of speakers and a considerable part of public opinion remains rather skeptical of the prospect of full linguistic integration. The political context makes the implementation of a language act particularly challenging; the low number of speakers means that there little room to excuse such public expenditure under the pretext of utility. The problems that arise from the need to recruit bilingual staff are obvious: the need for Irish speakers in the civil service would undoubtedly destabilize the sectarian balance by hiring a disproportionate amount of Catholic Irish speakers. Additionally, the act would not be likely to change the number of speakers which is currently decreasing. Even in the case of Scotland, the number of total Gaelic speakers has decreased between 2001 and 2011, despite the language act (Scotland Census 2001; Scotland Census 2011). Some of the tools present under the Good Friday Agreement that are based on consociational principles of linguistic autonomy and proportional representation have so far served the peace process well. Maintaining a public body for the representation of Irish speaker in addition to allocating funds for the promotion of the language and allowing catholic children to be educated in Irish as is currently the case is an acceptable compromise for both communities. The gaps and vagueness of the Agreement when it comes to these issues should be addressed with great care. As the most recent electoral campaign has clearly demonstrated, the Irish language remains a divisive and polarizing issue that we, as academics, ought to take into account.

All in all, it is important for academics to take political developments into consideration; finding false comfort in theoretical assumptions while being disconnected from ongoing incidents and circumstances inadvertently leads to empirical imprecisions. The Northern Irish case presents a clear message for a nuanced theoretical approach, open to empirical findings; none of the two frameworks as they are currently advocated has the possibility to fully address the shortcomings of the Agreement. It is equally irrational for consociationalists to argue against educational integration when there is a clear potential for ameliorating peace as it is for integrationsits to ignore the historical and political context in order to push for more inclusive linguistic policy. As Northern Ireland gradually recovers from this vicious conflict, acknowledging what is realistically achievable all while exploiting openings to solidify peace is the ideal way forward.

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