



## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **Civilian Masculinities and Conflict**

#### **An Examination of Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories**

*Author*  
Campbell, Seamus

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# **Civilian Masculinities and Conflict: An Examination of Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories**

Seamus Campbell, BSc, MA.

Transitional Justice Institute, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences,  
Ulster University

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I confirm that the word for this thesis is less than 100,000 words, excluding the title page, contents, acknowledgments, summary or abstract, abbreviations, footnotes, diagrams, maps, illustrations, tables, appendices, and references or bibliography.



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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines how protracted conflict and military occupation impact upon the masculinities of civilian men. While there has been much theorising about masculinities and their enduring associations with warfare and collective violence (Ni Aoláin et al. 2011), there has been comparatively little research conducted on the identities of men who remain civilian during such periods (Foster 2011). Moreover, their experiences and vulnerabilities have often been overlooked within the media and within humanitarian policy and practice (Allsopp, 2015; Hutchings 2011). In order, therefore, to help address such gaps, this study explores the experiences and identities of civilian men from two seemingly quite disparate sites of conflict, namely, Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Within Northern Ireland, interviews were conducted with research participants who had been active within boxing either during or after the conflict. Their conflict narratives are thus woven into their personal histories as boxers and/or as boxing coaches. The data which emerged reveals how young men often found salvation within the sport, through the acquisition of masculine identities which, although civilian in character, were nevertheless highly culturally valued in working-class communities during the period.

By contrast, within the Occupied Territories, interviews and focus groups exploring the effects of ongoing conflict and military occupation were carried out primarily with Palestinian university students. Their narratives reveal how civilian men in this context utilise their agency in order to minimise their vulnerabilities and affirm their masculinities in ways which are not associated with the use of violence, particularly through the utilisation of various forms of knowledge.

Ultimately, within both of these settings, the violence to which the participants had been exposed had a significant impact upon how they sought to construct and affirm their male identities. This examination thus enables a more holistic understanding of the continuum of men's conflict-related experiences, and for the theorisation of civilian masculinities beyond the confines of a singular site of conflict.



## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

BABA	British Amateur Boxing Association
CAIN	Conflict Archive on the Internet
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
IABA	Irish Amateur Boxing Association
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMAGES	International Men and Gender Equality Survey
IRA	Irish Republican Army
NIBA	Northern Ireland Boxing Association
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
OFMdfM	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
OSAGI	Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force



## Outline Map of Northern Ireland: Main Cities, Towns and Villages



Figure 1: Map of Northern Ireland (McCool 2019).





Figure 2: Map of Israel-Palestine (BBC News no date available).



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Research Rationale

In late 2002, Munir Abu Kishek, a Palestinian boxer with ambitions to compete at the 2004 Olympics in Athens, was forced to train alone after his sparring partner was shot and killed by Israeli soldiers following a confrontation with Palestinian stone throwers. Unable to find a suitable replacement and separated from his coach as a result of the plethora of checkpoints within the West Bank city of Nablus, Munir followed his workout regime alone in order to keep his “dream” of competing at the Olympics alive.

The story is retold here as it touches upon a number of issues which this thesis seeks to explore. Firstly, it draws attention to men living within conflict-affected societies who, like Munir, do not resort to political violence but instead navigate their conflict environments as civilians. Secondly, the death of his sparring partner at the hands of the Israeli military serves to illustrate the vulnerability to which men within conflicted societies are often exposed, regardless of the extent of their conflict participation.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, Munir’s identity as an aspiring pugilist provides an example of a form of masculinity which, although civilian in character, is nevertheless valued within a conflict-affected context. Finally, Munir’s story includes reference to both boxing and the challenges associated with the checkpoint regime within the Occupied Palestinian Territories, both of which are examined in this thesis with reference to the performance of masculinity within conflicted societies.

From a personal perspective, this research was fuelled by a curiosity as to the ways in which men like Munir navigate armed conflict and perform their masculinities as civilians. While it has been noted that it is overwhelmingly men who participate in violent conflict (Cockburn 2001), it has also been acknowledged that many men do not take up arms but instead remain civilian during such periods (Wright 2014). Despite this, however, it would appear that civilian men remain largely invisible within scholarship, the media, and humanitarian policy and practice (Foster 2011; Hutchings 2011; Allsopp 2015). I was thus drawn by a desire to shed light on the diverse experiences and identities of civilian men affected by conflict.

---

<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Israeli forces continue to open fire regularly on Palestinian demonstrators, as evidenced by their response to recent protests along the perimeter fence with Gaza (B’Tselem 2018).

Moreover, by consciously shifting the focus from militarised actors to their civilian counterparts, it was felt that this research could open up space for new ways of thinking about masculinities and violent conflict. Although a small number of studies had previously examined the experiences and identities of civilian men within conflicted societies (see Dolan 2002; Foster 2011; Lwambo 2013; Myrntinen et al. 2014; Wright 2014; Gokani et al. 2015), few had made explicit reference to their identities as civilians, or had linked this part of their identities with the performance of their masculinities (Dolan and Foster's studies perhaps being the clearest exceptions to this). Hence, by focusing on what I refer to as civilian masculinities, a term which remains utilised by a handful of scholars at most (see Pattinson et al. 2017; Kunz et al. 2018; Tapscott 2018), it was felt that the research had the potential to create space for the development of an expansive subfield within scholarship on gender and conflict.

Upon setting out on this research journey it was thus recognised that gendered analyses of conflict had largely focused upon men as perpetrators of armed violence (see Cockburn 2001; Skjelsbaek 2001; Goldstein 2003; Francis 2004; Steans 2006), and that there remained a relative paucity of literature on the experiences and identities of civilian men (Foster 2011). Moreover, it was clear that there had been little acknowledgment that men could be vulnerable or, indeed, the victims of armed violence (Carpenter 2003; Hutchings 2011; Myrntinen et al. 2017). It was evident, therefore, that there was a need to move beyond equating masculinities and conflict exclusively with violence and soldiering (McKeown and Sharoni 2002), and to recognise the extent to which the experience of vulnerability can have a profound effect upon the ways in which masculinities are enacted within conflicted societies (Dolan 2002; Foster 2011; Lwambo 2013; Wright 2014).

## **1.2 Research Aims and Questions**

In light of such gaps, this thesis aims to contribute to existing scholarship by examining the experiences, vulnerabilities and identities of civilian men within conflicted societies, with particular reference to Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It provides a critical insight into the lived realities of conflict as perceived by members of this group, and discusses the links between the experience of vulnerability and the implications of this in terms of the performance

of civilian masculinity. In the context of Northern Ireland, this is explored through the life histories of those who (like Munir) sought to express their identities and contribute to their communities through their pursuit of boxing. By contrast, within the Occupied Territories such themes are explored primarily with reference to the experiences of Palestinian students as they pursue their education and navigate the checkpoint regime and the wider effects of conflict and occupation.<sup>2</sup>

These sites clearly differ in terms of their geographical location and the character and status of their respective conflicts. Moreover, the demographics of the research participants also vary according to the site of recruitment. It is argued, however, that the examination of these sites and their respective participants allowed for the exploration of a range of conflict experiences, and thus facilitated a wider, cross-cultural examination of civilian men and their masculine identities (as will be further outlined within Chapters 3 and 8).

In order to guide the study, a number of key research questions were developed which varied somewhat depending on the particularities of the context. With regard to Northern Ireland, such questions included:

- In what ways were masculinities associated with boxing performed during the conflict?
  
- How were these civilian expressions of masculinity perceived by those within their communities?
  
- In what ways did the masculinity inherent within the sport facilitate mutual respect and cooperation among those on both sides of the community/religious divide?
  
- What role does the sport play in post-agreement Northern Ireland?

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<sup>2</sup> Unless stated otherwise, throughout this thesis the Occupied (Palestinian) Territories refers to the West Bank and East Jerusalem. It does not, however, include the Gaza strip, and no fieldwork was conducted there.

By contrast, within the Occupied Territories the research was guided by the following questions:

- How are the lives of Palestinians affected by ongoing conflict and military occupation?
- How do Palestinian civilians experience crossing security checkpoints and interactions with Israeli security personnel?
- In what ways does the conflict impact upon the ability of Palestinian men to perform their masculinities in line with normative standards?
- What culturally valued expressions of masculinity remain open to civilian men within this context?

### **1.3 Significance and Contributions of the Research**

The research therefore contributes to existing literature by providing empirical evidence of how protracted conflict and military occupation impact upon the masculinities of civilian men. Through the examination of two seemingly quite disparate sites of conflict, it provides a varied and nuanced examination of male experience and identity that transcends the specificities of time and space, and thus enables conceptualisations of civilian masculinity which are likely to have resonance in many conflict-affected contexts.

From a policy perspective, the research draws attention to the presence and, indeed, vulnerability of civilian men within conflicted societies. It challenges the extent to which their presumed ability to participate effectively in conflict renders them less innocent, vulnerable, or worthy of protection. It highlights the consequences of the gendered norms embedded within the civilian protection regime, and suggests that there is a need to reconceptualise those whom we think of as civilians and their attendant protection requirements. It also illustrates some of the ways in which civilian men navigate conflict and find alternative ways in which to construct and affirm their male identities. Finally, it facilitates reflection on how we define peacebuilding interventions within conflict-affected contexts, and argues that the

success of such initiatives may depend upon their ability to validate civilian forms of masculinity.

## **1.4 Thesis Outline**

The structure of the thesis is presented below. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 examines the literature on the gendered dynamics of armed conflict, and in particular the ways in which masculinities have been discussed within such scholarship. It highlights the extent to which scholarship of this nature has often focused upon violent or militarised masculinities, while often overlooking the experiences and identities of civilian men. It thus argues that while adult men may not be thought as “paradigmatic” civilians (Kinsella 2011: 16), advancing our knowledge of the complexity of their conflict-related experiences and identities would appear critical to the evolution of a broader and more accurate understanding of masculinities and conflict.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology employed in order to achieve the aims of the study. It locates the research within the field of men and masculinities, and provides a rationale for the inclusion of two seemingly quite disparate sites of conflict and their respective research participants. It describes how the data was collected and analysed, and considers the positionality of the researcher within each of these contexts. It also reflects upon the ethical challenges which arose given the complexities of conducting research within conflict-affected contexts.

Chapter 4 situates the conflicts within both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in relation to their historical roots. It examines the key historical events which occurred prior to and during the conduction of hostilities, and the efforts which have been made to bring the conflicts to an end. It notes the development of boxing within Northern Ireland, and the dynamics present within the sport both during and after the conflict. A gendered interpretation of the history of the regions is also woven within the chapter’s narrative, thus situating the gender dynamics of both societies within a wider historical context.

Chapter 5 explores the legal and philosophical underpinnings of two concepts which are integral to the research, namely the civilian and the male body, and links them to the performance of masculinity during contemporary armed conflict. The chapter

charts the historical development of the civilian protection regime, and highlights how gendered assumptions have shaped perceptions of the protection needs of various groups of civilians, including civilian men. Moreover, it draws attention to the corporality of civilian suffering and how the experience of bodily vulnerability can have a significant impact upon male identity. It thus links civilian protection, bodily vulnerability and masculinities in a manner which has not previously been undertaken.

Chapter 6 presents the findings which emerged from the data collected within Northern Ireland. It examines the role which boxing played in lives of the participants, revealing how many of them found salvation within the sport despite ongoing political violence. It describes the sanctuary found within boxing clubs, and the forms of fatherly masculinity often modelled by boxing coaches. It discusses the masculine status afforded to those who pursued the sport, and the shared masculine values which served temporarily to transcend community/religious divisions during the period. It is argued that, in this context, boxing could have been regarded as a peacebuilding intervention, one which sought to address young men's culturally sanctioned gendered interests and identities whilst steering them away from political violence and criminality.

Chapter 7 presents the findings which emerged from the data collected within the Occupied Territories. It reveals the extent to which the participants felt vulnerable to the effects of armed conflict, and the consequences of this in terms of male identity. It discusses the meaning which the participants attached to their status as civilians, and examines the ways in which ongoing conflict and military occupation have served to undermine male identities - particularly in relation to the operation of the checkpoint regime. Moreover, the chapter identifies how the participants found alternative ways of expressing their masculinities, including through the utilisation of various forms of knowledge, the pooling of economic resources, and by persisting with their lives in spite of the challenges inherent within this conflict-affected context.

Chapter 8 discusses the findings which emerged from both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories and what they can reveal about masculinities and conflict more broadly. It explores how conflict has shaped masculinities within these sites, and

draws attention to the similarities and differences in terms of the experiences and identities of the participants. It outlines several themes which were deemed to be largely applicable to both sites, including male vulnerability, the management of the body, the utilisation of masculine resources, and socially and culturally valued civilian masculinities. In addition, the chapter identifies a number of themes which were especially relevant to one site in particular. Within Northern Ireland those identified were protection and civilian men, and masculine bonds and friendship; while caution and vigilance as masculine attributes and the significance of civilian status were those identified within the Occupied Territories. It is argued that an analysis of the findings from both sites lays the ground for new theoretical approaches and policy interventions which may have resonance within a plurality of conflict-affected contexts.

Finally, Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by providing an overview of the key findings and their contribution to the field of masculinities and conflict. It argues that research within the field must look beyond those engaged in armed violence, and acknowledge the experiences and identities of those who remain civilian during such periods. It suggests directions for further research, particularly in relation to civilian masculinities, and argues that this particular area of study remains very much an open one. The chapter also acknowledges the limitations of the study, and closes by offering a final reflection on the research project and its utility.

## **Chapter 2: Gendered Vulnerability, Masculinities and Conflict**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the relevant literature in relation to the gendered dynamics of armed conflict and collective violence. In particular, it explores the ways in which masculinities have been discussed within scholarship, and, indeed, the extent to which such scholarship has often focused upon violent or militarised masculinities. It also identifies the relative paucity of literature which has sought to explore the experiences, identities and vulnerabilities of men who remain civilian during such periods. This chapter will therefore seek to demonstrate that, as noted within Chapter 1, while civilian men are rarely thought of as “paradigmatic” civilians (Kinsella 2011: 16), furthering our understanding of their conflict-related experiences and identities seems critical to the development of a more holistic understanding of masculinities and conflict.

### **2.2 Gender and Conflict**

While the study of armed conflict and collective violence has traditionally been silent on gender, in recent times it has increasingly been explored through a gendered lens (Schulz 2017). As various scholars have noted, gender affects the ways in which people experience conflict and, indeed, has a significant bearing on their needs and aspirations in its aftermath (Pankhurst 2008; Foster 2011). Much of this scholarship has examined how women have been affected by armed conflict (Theidon 2007), including their experiences as civilians and victims (Carpenter 2003; Myrntinen et al. 2017). As Myrntinen et al. (2014) note, however, a truly gendered approach to understanding both conflict and peace is not possible without bringing men, as gendered beings, into the analysis.

When men have been included within gender analyses of armed conflict, they have principally been analysed as perpetrators of violence (Myrntinen et al. 2017). As scholars have rightly noted, it is primarily men who participate in war and dominate the discourses and value systems which lead to war (Cockburn 2001; Skjelsbaek 2001). It is also predominately men who make battle plans and invent and supervise the construction of weapons (Steans 2006). In many parts of the world manhood has

been, and indeed continues to be, characterised by a readiness to engage in battle (Cockburn 2001; Skjelsbaek and Smith 2001). For Francis (2004), therefore, the very institution of war is premised on the belief that men should accept the inflicting and suffering violence as part of their masculine role.

By contrast, women have often been viewed not as participants of armed conflict, but as its primary victims (Myrntinen et al. 2017). It has been historically rare, for example, for women to participate in conflict in large numbers (Connell 2002; Goldstein 2003). Moreover, as Baaz and Stern (2009) note, sexual violence against women has commonly been seen as an inevitable part of violent conflict, and according to Steans (2006), the notion that women represent the spoils of war remains part of the ideology of militarism. Hence, as a result of such factors, and as a consequence of their perceived lack of access to arms, equating women (and children) with vulnerability and victimhood has, it seems, become a mainstay of the discourse on civilian protection (Carpenter 2003).

However, such paradigmatic approaches to civilian protection are often at odds with the realities and gendered complexities of armed conflict (Cleaver 2000). Goldstein (2003), for example, notes that when women have performed combat roles in war, they have often done so successfully, or as well as most men. In recent decades, women have accounted for a substantial proportion of combatants in Colombia, Eritrea, Liberia, Nepal and Sri Lanka, and have participated in numerous other conflicts around the globe (Schöb 2014; Wright 2014).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, women have often supported men's participation within militarised groups and impressed upon their perhaps reluctant male kin the necessity of violent action (Skjelsbaek 2001). Indeed, as Whitworth (2004) notes, cultures which have historically been predicated upon displays of war and cruelty have often had the full support of women.

Furthermore, while men are often thought to have a natural propensity towards aggression (Connell 2002; Whitworth 2004), it seems that persuading men to participate in warfare is often a difficult task. Whitworth (2004), for example, argues that men's natural's instinct for violence is not so unwavering that militaries have

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<sup>3</sup>The participation of unprecedented numbers of children has also been feature of contemporary armed conflict (Honwana 2011).

relied upon it to produce the quantity and quality of warriors required. As Francis (2004) states, men recruited by military institutions must be trained and conditioned before they can be reliably expected to kill during combat. For Goldstein (2003: 253) therefore, war is something that societies must impose upon men who are often dragged into it “kicking and screaming.”

Moreover, while men are often the primary perpetrators of armed violence, they are also often disproportionately its primary victims (Vess et al. 2013; Wright 2014). In Northern Ireland, for instance, ninety-one per cent of all those who lost their lives during the conflict were male (Harland 2011), and figures of a similar nature have been found across a range of conflict settings (Jones 2004). In addition, while many men do not join militarised groups during periods of conflict (Wright 2014), it seems that their experiences and identities as civilians often goes unexamined as they fall on the wrong side of the gendered peace and violence dichotomy (Moran 2010). In short, therefore, to view conflict violence as perpetrated by violent men performing militarised masculinities at the expense of vulnerable women (and children) is to ignore the realities and intricacies of violent conflict, as will be further explored below.

### **2.3 Masculinities**

The sociology of masculinity, which concerns the critical study of the behaviours, practices, values and perspectives of men (Whitehead and Barrett 2001), came into its own from middle of the twentieth century onwards (Hamber 2007). Although largely western centric to begin with (Hamber 2007), it has been increasingly utilised internationally in recent decades (Connell 2005). As Dowd (2008) notes, while the field initially had a clear pro-feminist stance, it appears that the examination of gendered power dynamics has become less pronounced over time. Despite this however, feminist scholars have recognised that the study of masculinity has made men visible as gendered beings (Dowd 2008), when previously they were often regarded as ungendered or naturalised (Hearn 2003). As Goldstein (2003) argues, gender is as relevant to men as it is to women, and, hence, it would appear to be a positive development that men recognise that their gender identities are not peripheral to how they experience the world (Whitehead and Barrett 2001).

Whitehead and Barrett (2001) argue that masculinities can be described as those behaviours, languages and practices which exist in specific cultural and organisational locations, and which are commonly associated with men. Masculinities are embedded within social practices, ideologies and discourses (Barrett 2001), and men do masculinity in a variety of ways depending on the resources and strategies available within a given social setting (Connell 2000); as will be further explored in relation to the data which emerged from both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories. Masculinity is, therefore, said to be a cultural construction or performance rather than a universal or unchanging essence (Hatty 2000). Moreover, while masculinity and masculinities are used somewhat interchangeably within scholarship, it is widely accepted that a plurality of masculinities exist (Whitworth 2004) and perhaps even as many masculinities as there are men (Hamber 2006).

As Connell (2005) notes, however, masculinity is an inherently relational concept and only has meaning in relation to femininity. While masculinity is often associated with aggressiveness, risk-taking, and physical skill (Jeong 2000; Barrett 2001), femininity by contrast is often associated with gentleness, affection, and sensitivity to others (Sobieraj 1998; Jeong 2000). As gender identities, masculinities and femininities are actively constructed through social interactions (Connell 2000), they are therefore negotiated interpretations of what it means to be a man or a woman (Skjelsbaek 2001). Thus, such identities can vary significantly over time, space, or the duration of one's life (Whitehead and Barrett 2001), and as this research shows, can vary enormously from one site of conflict to another.

Moreover, as scholars have noted, attributes which are often regarded as masculine or feminine can be possessed by either men or women (Large 1997; Dowd 2008), and, hence, there is not necessarily a link between masculinities and men (Sa'ar and Yahia-Younis 2008), or between femininities and women. Within Chapter 7, for example, I note how female soldiers stationed at Israeli security checkpoints also appeared to perform militarised forms of masculinity. It is also important to note that in many cultural contexts there are more than two gender identities (Farrag no date available), which again highlights the extent to which such

identities are socially constructed rather than the consequences of biology (Sobieraj 1998; Connell 2000).

However, while gender identities and dynamics vary significantly cross-culturally (Cockburn 2001), men and their masculinities are privileged within virtually all contemporary societies (Flood 2001). In Western societies, for instance, men's incomes continue to exceed those of women, and the higher echelons of business, the military and government are dominated by masculine actors; the state itself being a masculine institution (Connell 2005). As Ramet (1996) notes, however, such dynamics not only discriminate against women as individuals, but assert the preeminence of male culture over female culture. Thus, the social construction of gender is not only a construction of difference, but also one of domination (Sobieraj 1998).

While men, in general, benefit from their superior cultural power within modern societies, such power is not, however, shared equally. At any given time, Connell (2005) argues, one form of masculinity is likely to be culturally exalted. While such a form is not a fixed character type and, is therefore, always contestable, it nevertheless occupies a hegemonic position within a particular pattern of gender relations (Connell 2005), thus defining successful manhood (Bickford 2003). It thus can be viewed as an idealised form of masculinity which men can be measured against in order to determine the extent of their manliness (Mills 2001). In western societies, Barrett (2001) notes that hegemonic masculinity is characterised by aggression, heterosexuality and rationality, and is often personified by those in leadership positions within businesses, governments, and militaries (Connell 2002). It is argued that such a form of masculinity requires both disrespect for other forms of masculinity and indeed for women's empowerment (UNESCO 2000); thus linking it inextricably to the operation of patriarchy (Dowd 2008; Ni Aoláin et al. 2011).

The work which scholars such as Connell have undertaken has thus proven critical in exposing the power that certain types of men and masculinities wield within contemporary societies. Moreover, it has also revealed how the power dynamics which exist between men also produce subordinate and marginal forms of masculinity (Whitehead and Barrett 2001). As Flood (2001) notes, gender intersects

with other markers of identity such as race, class and sexuality so that the patriarchal dividend is shared very unequally. An intersectional approach to male identity can, therefore, help to uncover the complexities of men's lives including their relationship to power (Pini and Pease 2013).

An intersectional approach to identity can also help to uncover the power dynamics which exist between men in conflicted societies. In relation to this study, it is utilised to examine the power dynamics which existed between the civilian participants and the armed actors they encountered within their respective environments. In addition, it is also used to explore the social position of the participants, and the resources which were available to the respective groups from which to construct their masculine identities.<sup>4</sup> At this point, however, it is worth noting that while significant power differentials exist between men within both peaceful and conflicted societies, even subordinated masculinities stand to benefit in various ways from the outworking of male privilege (Cahn and Ni Aoláin 2010).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity thus attempts to deal with the relational issues in masculinity (Cleaver 2000). While heavily drawn upon within scholarship, it has also faced criticism (Kunz et al. 2018). Anderson (2011), for example, argues that the theory does not account for multiple masculinities existing within a given cultural space, without any of them necessarily occupying a hegemonic position. The concept has also received criticism for its imprecise use in various cultural contexts (Kunz et al. 2018), sometimes being used to denote the most widespread rather than necessarily the most powerful form of masculinity within a given setting (Myrntinen et al. 2017). For these reasons, therefore, this research does not explicitly utilise the term hegemonic masculinity, but instead attempts to account for the multiple forms of masculinity and their relative levels of power within their given cultural settings (see Anderson 2011).

More recently, Anderson has coined the term inclusive masculinity, perhaps as something of a counterweight to the win/lose dichotomy which appears inherent within hegemonic/marginal interpretations of masculinity. Anderson (2007) argues that inclusive masculinity is not predicated on domination or exclusion, but on the

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 6, 7 and 8 for a more in depth discussion of the relative power of the participants within their respective societies.

inclusion of forms of masculinity which may otherwise be marginalised. Within a culture of inclusive masculinity, men are permitted to support each other in times of crisis or loss, and are free from continually having to prove their heterosexuality (Anderson 2011). Anderson (2007) asserts that cultures of inclusive masculinity can be found within many masculinised institutions, thus questioning the notion that such institutions are often saturated within traditional or harmful forms of masculinity. This concept is noted herein as I found it very much resonated with my own findings in relation to the masculine cultures to be found within Northern Irish boxing clubs (as will further explored within Chapter 6).

While the burden of conforming to prevailing gender norms may be reduced within inclusive masculine cultures, it seems that men nevertheless often feel intense pressure to abide by societal expectations in relation to the performance of masculinity (Hamber 2007). As scholars have noted, there is often a significant disparity between men's lived experiences of masculinity, and their lived expectations of it, not least during and after periods of armed conflict (Dolan 2002; Lwambo 2013). It is argued, therefore, that for men in many cultural contexts, failing to meet local standards of manhood can lead to feelings of shame, frustration and inadequacy (Porter 2013).

Hence, while masculinity is often associated with power and domination, it is important to note that it is also a terribly fragile construct (Kaufmann 1987). It can never be definitively proven, it must be performed again and again (Dowd 2008), and it is always "vulnerable and at risk" (Ferber and Kimmel 2005: 16). While men in many societies may collectively hold the keys to institutional and cultural power, it seems that individual men often feel relatively powerless and insecure with regard to their gender identities (Kimmel 2000). In relation to this research, such insights were particularly evident when, for example, the participants from the Occupied Territories spoke about their experiences of interacting with Israeli security personnel at checkpoints.<sup>5</sup> Recognising the vulnerability of male identities therefore would also appear to be an important part of gaining a more nuanced understanding of masculinities and conflict, particularly in relation to forms of masculinity not associated with the use of political violence.

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<sup>5</sup> These experiences are explored at greater length in Chapters 7 and 8.

As Wright (2014) notes, gender norms are not only attitudes and beliefs held by individuals, but are shaped and perpetuated by political, economic, and social and cultural structures and institutions. For Karner (1998), no single institution has influenced modern (western) conceptions of masculinity more than sport. Sport is said to have emerged in western societies in the early twentieth century in response to the rapid social and economic changes which threatened to undermine male authority and identity (Messner 1990; Sorek 2009). As it emerged, Messner (1990) contends that it facilitated psychological separation from the perceived feminisation of society and provided opportunities for masculine validation through displays of male superiority, an argument which very much resonated with the data which emerged from Northern Ireland.

Moreover, as Connell (2002) notes, sport not only reflects, but actively produces particular forms of masculinity. Within contact/combat sport such as boxing, it is argued that those from disadvantaged backgrounds are often overrepresented as they provide for the establishment of valid masculine identities within resources and option restricted contexts (Messner 1990), an argument which this research supports.<sup>6</sup> In addition, while some of the forms of masculinity found within sport have been regarded as problematic (De Garis 2000), it has also been recognised that sport can be utilised to support peacebuilding and social development (Wilson 2012), and hence that it can also foster positive and inclusive forms of masculinity. What is novel about this research, however, is that it connects sport, male identity, conflict, and peacebuilding in a way which has not previously been attempted, and thus makes a relevant contribution to multiple areas of inquiry.

## **2.4 Masculinities and Conflict**

As noted previously, it has been, and indeed continues to be, overwhelmingly men who use violence during periods of armed conflict. Numerous scholars have noted the apparent links between masculinities and conflict violence and research within this field has focused overwhelmingly on violent and militarised masculinities (Skjelsbaek 2001; Francis 2004; Steans 2006; Merry 2009; Ni Aoláin et al. 2011). Such forms of masculinity have been characterised by physical strength, aggression, dominance, bravery, skill, endurance, heterosexuality, and a willingness to die in

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 6 and 8 for a wider discussion on the role which boxing played in validating the masculinities of participants from Northern Ireland.

combat (Goldstein 2003; Steans 2006; Theidon 2007; Clarke 2008; Langa and Eagle 2008; Porter 2013). Those who embody such forms have often been thought to be real men (Clarke 2008; Langa and Eagle 2008), and the warrior continues to be a central component of manhood within many societies (McKeown and Sharoni 2002; Goldstein 2003).

A number of scholars have also argued that state militaries in particular often play a significant role in shaping images of masculinity within wider society (Barrett 2001; Dudink 2002; Hearn 2003; Hopton 2003). Higate and Hopton (2005) note that boys encounter many militaristic influences during their formative years, and that state militaries have a vested interest in maintaining strong conceptual links between soldiering and the attainment of masculinity. Moreover, it has been argued that military masculinity often shares much in common with hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2002; Whitworth 2004; Higate and Hopton 2005). For Hopton (2003), therefore, militaristic ideals represent extreme expressions of hegemonic masculinity, while Connell (2000) is of the opinion that military prowess partly defines hegemonic masculinity in many parts of the world.

The focus within scholarship on violent and militarised masculinities is to a significant extent understandable. Masculine violence clearly represents a significant problem which is particularly apparent during armed conflict. In fact, for Dekeseredy and Schwartz (2005), much of what is regrettable in the world, from genocide to interpersonal violence, is due to men and some of their masculinities. In highlighting the links between masculinities and violent conflict, however, scholars have largely overlooked the experiences and identities of men who do not engage in violence (Foster 2011). The research, therefore, seeks to address this gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence of the experiences and identities of civilian men within conflicted societies.

Within gendered scholarship it would appear that there is often an assumption that men are largely absent from civilian life, either as a result of their engagement in combat or due to their conflict-related deaths. For example, in their study of the impact of the conflict on the health and roles of women living within border communities in Ireland, Boydell et al. (2008: 19) argue that:

(...) whilst men commonly engage directly in acts of war and violence, women usually carry responsibility for maintaining the normality of everyday family life, sustaining family relationships, and protecting and maintaining their families' health and safety.

Similarly, McDowell (2008: 338-339) asserts that women within both loyalist and republican communities in Northern Ireland:

(...) were expected to be keepers of the "home flame" for imprisoned freedom fighters, and as wives of security forces they lived with the constant fear of their husbands not returning from work.

However, while women undoubtedly did play such roles during the Northern Irish conflict, statements such as these appear to overlook the fact that many men, even within staunchly loyalist and republican communities, undoubtedly remained civilian and continued to contribute to both family and community life during the period.

The continued presence of substantial numbers of civilian men has also been noted within a number of other conflict-affected societies (Carpenter 2003; Wright 2014). To use but one example, of the 4.8 million Syrian refugees registered in 2016, 49.2 per cent were male, almost half of whom were adults (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation 2016). Despite this however, it appears that women and children continue to be thought of as civilians in a way that unarmed adult men are not (Carpenter 2006a), and that civilian men continue to represent something of a blind spot within both military and humanitarian thinking (Hutchings 2011). The research thus seeks to challenge such gendered assumptions by making the lives and identities of civilian men visible within both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories.

Moreover, while scholarship has often focused on the perpetration of masculine violence, it is also important to note that men, and particularly civilian men, may also be vulnerable to the effects of conflict violence (Dolan 2002; Jones 2004; Wright 2014). As Fineman (2008: 8) notes, while vulnerability has often been associated with victimhood, deprivation, and dependency, it is in fact "a universal,

inevitable and enduring aspect of the human condition.” While our vulnerabilities may range in magnitude at the individual level (Fineman 2008), all human bodies are fundamentally dependent and vulnerable, our shared injurability being part of our common condition (Segal 2008). Fineman’s work thus contributes to the establishment of a more encompassing understanding of vulnerability which I have sought to draw upon in order to highlight the inherent vulnerability of all those affected by the conduction of armed conflict.

While vulnerability, therefore, cannot be confined to those of a particular age or gender, it would appear, as noted above, that men are often those most at risk of losing their lives or suffering repression during periods of armed violence (Jones 2004; Wright 2014). Violent conflict then is also gendered in ways which are rarely acknowledged. As a consequence, it seems that male vulnerability to both psychological and physical injury has often been downplayed within both mainstream and gender sensitive accounts of conflict (Segal 2008), and there remains a significant gap within scholarship in relation to the persecution of non-combatant men (Farrag no date available). Certainly, our tendency to categorise women as vulnerable and men as perpetrators has, it seems, rendered the concept of male vulnerability during conflict to be essentially unimaginable (Myrntinen et al. 2017).

The vulnerability to which men are exposed also has implications in terms of their gender identities. While conflict has often been thought of as a theatre within which men can affirm and enhance their masculinities through the use of violence (Friðriksdóttir 2018), it has also been noted that violent conflict has the potential to threaten masculine identities (Dolan 2002). It is argued, for example, that militarisation, displacement, the loss of livelihood and exposure to sexual violence can place significant strain on men’s gendered sense of self (Alison 2007; Foster 2011). Moreover, witnessing and yet being unable to prevent violence against one’s family or community is also said to potentially humiliating for men, given their traditional roles as protectors (Porter 2013). Hence, rather than experiencing conflict as an opportunity to express their masculine prowess, it is argued that war may also be experienced, particularly by civilian men, as deeply disempowering and potentially emasculating (Linos 2009; Foster 2011; Lwambo 2013).

The extent to which conflict may threaten men's gender identities appears to be rooted, to a significant extent, in their diminished capabilities to fulfil their roles as providers and protectors. In contexts such as Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), it has been noted how conflict and economic hardship has made it difficult for men to fulfil masculine expectations in relation to such roles (Lwambo 2013; Vess et al. 2013; Wright 2014). Similarly, in the context of Uganda, Dolan (2002) has noted how militarisation not only left civilian men vulnerable to conflict violence, but also created significant economic disparities between civilians and combatants. Furthermore, the experience of sexual violence may lead to the belief that one's masculinity has been severely compromised, which may cause feelings of humiliation and feminisation (Baaz and Stern 2009; Alison 2007).

It would also appear that the experience of living under military occupation may be particularly threatening for men's gendered sense of self. As De Matos and Ward (2012) note, military occupations, by their very nature, are characterised by asymmetrical power relations and share much in common with colonial structures. While research in relation to gender and occupation remains in its infancy (De Matos and Ward 2012), in the context of the Occupied Territories it has been noted how the ability of men (particularly fathers) to provide for and protect their families has been severely undermined by the violence associated with the occupation (Gokani et al. 2015). Examining masculinities within this context thus provides an opportunity to address the gap in the literature and to examine the vulnerabilities of conflict-affected identities under particularly disempowering conditions (Sa'ar and Yahia-Younis 2008). In addition, this research acknowledges a number of enactments of masculinity which have not previously been identified within the Occupied Territories, thus providing something of a base from which other scholars may draw.

Within scholarship on masculinities and conflict, hegemonic masculinity has often been associated with, and conflated with, violent and/or militarised masculinity (Kunz et al. 2018). However, despite the fact that violent conflict would often appear to challenge the masculinities of civilian men, a number of scholars have questioned whether violent or militarised masculinities are necessarily hegemonic during such periods (Myrntinen et al. 2017; Friðriksdóttir 2018; Kunz et

al. 2018). In their research in the DRC, for example, Baaz and Stern (2009) found that violence orchestrated by soldiers against the civilian population was often an expression of frustration due to factors such as poverty and neglect. For the soldiers, therefore, such violence represented a failure of their masculinities as much as it represented an attempt to reconstitute them through the use of violence. Similarly, in the context of Burundi, Friðriksdóttir (2018) found that for those who participated in her research, soldiering had proven to be an obstacle to manhood as it had prevented them from furthering their educational or business interests and thus from their securing their status as capable masculine providers.

Indeed, as Myrntinen et al. (2017) argue, the use of physical violence, either by individuals or militarised groups, is often the hallmark of subordinate rather than hegemonic masculinities, with low ranking soldiers, security guards or thugs often carrying out violent acts on behalf of more (economically) powerful men. Hence, equating violent or militarised masculinities with hegemony may risk misrepresenting the power of those who use violence. Moreover, as noted by Allsopp (2015), civilian men caught up in conflict can be at once both vulnerable and agentic, and thus, as stressed by Kunz et al. (2018), it seems that forms of masculinity which are not based on violence or militarism can also be highly socially and culturally valued during periods of conflict; a theme which is further explored within subsequent chapters.

In concluding this section, it is worth noting that the scholars mentioned in the aforementioned paragraphs were instrumental in broadening my conceptualisation of the study of men, masculinities and violent conflict. In particular, Chris Dolan's work in Northern Uganda drew my attention to both the presence and vulnerability of civilian men within conflicted societies, while Alana Foster's work in the Occupied Territories ignited my academic curiosity in the performance of masculinity under conditions of disempowerment and occupation. Additionally, the work of peacebuilding organisations including International Alert and Saferworld, and their inclusion of men within gendered analyses of conflict, strengthened my conviction that this was an area of inquiry that was worthy of further consideration and investigation. Indeed, it would appear that at present those working within civil society often have a broader understanding of the gendered dynamics of armed

conflict than their academic counterparts, a trend which this research aims to at least partially address.

## **2.5 Post-Conflict Masculinities**

Performances of masculinity are shaped not only by the experience of conflict, but also by the changing social, economic and political context in its aftermath (Hamber 2007). Research on masculinities in the wake of conflict however remains under-analysed (Cahn and Ni Aoláin 2010), and the ways in which conflict impacts upon men and women in gender-specific ways have not always been recognised or addressed within mainstream accounts of conflict and reconstruction (Farrag no date available). Research which has been conducted so far, however, suggests that masculinities in post-conflict contexts often face specific yet diverse challenges such as family separation, the loss of livelihood, and the impact of trauma (Porter 2013). It is thus argued that men often emerge from conflict with their masculinities damaged or wounded (Hamber 2007; Porter 2013), a view which would appear to be supported by the data which emerged from Northern Ireland. In this respect, therefore, this research also serves to further our knowledge of the potential challenges associated with the performance of masculinity in the aftermath of violent conflict.

As Porter (2013) notes, post-conflict societies often face an array of peacebuilding challenges with limited economic resources. Within such contexts, it is argued that poverty and rising expectations may make for a particularly potent mix in the fostering of violent masculinities (Hamber 2007). It has been noted, for instance, that women often face a backlash against their perceived empowerment within such contexts (Myrntinen 2009; Sigsworth and Valji 2012; Hamber 2007), as men who may be threatened by their increased visibility within the public sphere attempt to reassert their authority within the private sphere (Cahn and Ni Aoláin 2010; Sigsworth and Valji 2012; Lwambo 2013). Rather than regarding such violence as solely an assertion of male power however, it seems that it may also reflect an attempt by men to militate against their perceived powerlessness, or the thwarting of their masculinities, within such settings (Dolan 2002; Hamber 2007; Myrntinen et al. 2017).

Moreover, it appears that men in particular may lack the psychological support necessary in order to deal with difficult emotions in a positive manner. As Vess et al. (2013) note, in the aftermath of conflict the need for psychological support for victims of trauma is high. As argued by Pankhurst (2008), however, it seems that few if any post-conflict societies respond adequately to men thought to be suffering in this way. In particular, it is often difficult for male survivors of sexual violence to access gender-specific psychological care, and hence their needs often go unaddressed (Lwambo 2013). Furthermore, as a result of masculine norms, it is argued that men in post-conflict societies are often reluctant to seek help for their physical or psychological injuries, as to do so may be considered to be admitting to vulnerability or weakness (Wright 2014). Indeed, the data which emerged from this research would also appear to support this. For example, suicide rates among young men in communities which have been disproportionately affected by the conflict in Northern Ireland are often alarmingly high (NISRA 2017; McDonald 2018), while a concern for the physical and mental wellbeing of young men within their communities was expressed by a number of the research participants within this context.

Failure to receive adequate help and support, however, may serve to perpetuate masculine violence, including violence against women. An International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) study conducted in Bosnia-Herzegovina, for instance, found that men who reported committing, witnessing or experiencing violence during conflict were more likely subsequently to commit violence against women, including their female partners (cited in Vess et al. 2013). Hence, while not seeking to excuse or trivialise such violence, it seems that recognising and responding to male trauma may serve to reduce its perpetration and help both civilians and combatants adapt to the realities of the post-conflict environment. In relation to the data which emerged from Northern Ireland, participants often expressed the view that boxing enabled aggression to be channelled in a positive manner, while there was also awareness that boxing clubs could provide a supportive environment and help those with mental health difficulties to access help and support.

## **2.6 Masculinities and Peacebuilding**

According to Myrntinen et al. (2014), peacebuilding can be described as the development of the capacity to manage and resolve conflict in a non-violent manner. It thus typically involves a range of measures aimed at building structural and cultural peace (Galtung 1996), and of reducing the risk of states lapsing or relapsing into conflict (Barnett et al. 2007). Such measures may be implemented either before or after formal peace agreements (Alliance for Peacebuilding 2013) and aim to build capacities and relationships at multiple levels (Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice 2013). Peacebuilding efforts also attempt to address the root causes and effects of conflict, and to be effective it is argued that it must be built on strong social, economic and political foundations (Malek et al. 2013). Within the discipline, peace is not regarded as a point in time or a condition to be achieved, but is understood as a dynamic social construct, and as a process (Alliance for Peacebuilding 2013).

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The resolution affirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict and called for their full and equal participation in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security (OSAGI no date available). It was the first time that the Security Council formally recognised that women could be more than simply victims of armed conflict, and, hence, was regarded as something of a watershed (Otto 2009). While it remains the case that women continue to be marginalised within formal peacebuilding processes (McWilliams and Kilmurray 2014), few peacebuilding interventions are currently without a women, peace and security element (Myrntinen et al. 2014).

The women, peace and security agenda has however been criticised for reinforcing gendered stereotypes of armed conflict, including the vulnerability of women and invisibility of civilian men (Hirsch 2012; Myrntinen et al. 2014). While men have tended to be overrepresented within formal peacebuilding processes and within the field of peace and security more broadly, relatively little attention has been paid to their gendered identities (Wright 2014). Furthermore, their roles and identities within civil society organisations have also been largely overlooked (Christensen and Rasmussen 2015). Hence, as Foster (2011) notes, the gap in men's conflict-

related experiences has seemingly led to a tendency to structure men and masculinities as being at odds with peacebuilding discourses.

Nonetheless, more recently there has been a growing recognition of the need for peacebuilding efforts to examine and address men's gendered identities alongside those of women (Vess et al. 2013; Myrntinen et al. 2014). Such efforts, it is argued, should balance how gender is discussed and challenge the idea that masculinity always equals dominance, control and violence (New Tactics in Human Rights 2011). For Steinberg (2014), such a perspective should also acknowledge men's roles not only as perpetrators, but also as victims and witnesses of violence, and as potential peacebuilders. However, as Myrntinen et al. (2014) contend, including masculinities within the peacebuilding paradigm should not detract from efforts to implement the women, peace and security agenda, or from efforts aimed at transforming gendered power relations.

This research also contributes to our understanding of masculinities and peacebuilding by acknowledging the experiences, identities and vulnerabilities of civilian men. In relation to Northern Ireland, it draws attention to the ways in which boxing contributed to peace by (at least temporarily) bridging community divides and steering young men away from a path of political violence or criminality (at least according to the narratives of participants). In this respect, therefore, the research can broaden our understanding of the ways in which men in conflicted societies may contribute to peacebuilding (either formally or informally) and/or the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the ways in which conflict and post-conflict environments are discussed within gendered scholarship. It has explored how some of the gendered dynamics within such settings have been uncovered, while others remain largely unexplored. In particular, it has highlighted the extent to which gendered scholarship has focused upon violent or militarised enactments of masculinity, while overlooking the experiences, identities and vulnerabilities of men who remain civilian during such periods. It has also underlined the relative paucity of literature which exists on masculinities in the aftermath of conflict, and the way in

which the women, peace and security agenda has often failed to recognise the gendered nature of men's lives and identities.

In addition, the chapter has highlighted the ways in which this research augments and expands upon the existing literature. With regard to Northern Ireland, the research connects scholarship on sport, male identity, conflict and peacebuilding in a novel and innovative manner, and contributes to our understanding of the challenges associated with the performance of masculinity in the aftermath of conflict. In relation to the Occupied Territories, it provides new empirical data on the performance of masculinity amidst ongoing conflict and military occupation, and identifies several enactments of civilian masculinity which have not previously been acknowledged within this context. In doing so, it thus reveals the extent to which the performance of masculinity can vary significant from one conflict-affected setting to another.

The chapter which follows examines the process employed in order to achieve the objectives of the research. It provides a rationale for the inclusion of the two seemingly disparate sites of conflict, describes how the data was collected and analysed, reflects upon the positionality of the researcher, and reveals some of the ethical challenges which arose during the research process.

## **Chapter 3: The Research Process**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the process employed in order to achieve the objectives of the research. It locates the study within the field of men and masculinities and highlights the gaps within the available literature. It provides a rationale for the inclusion of two seemingly disparate sites of conflict, and for the recruitment of the respective groups of research participants. It describes the way in which data was collected and analysed, and examines the positionality of the researcher, including gendered positionality and vulnerability within the respective sites. Finally, the chapter reflects upon the ethical challenges which arose and were subsequently navigated during the course of the research.

### **3.2 Research Methodology**

As research that is focused on the study of men and masculinities, this work seeks to examine the experiences and identities of civilian men both during and after violent conflict (as described in Chapter 1). While civilian men have thus far been largely overlooked within gendered analyses of conflict (as noted in Chapter 2), this research aims to help address this gap by offering a theoretical and normative assessment of the experiences and identities of civilian men within two seemingly disparate sites of conflict, namely, Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. By doing so, it contributes to a more textured understanding of the gendered vulnerabilities of civilians within conflict-affected contexts.

As the study explores the nature of lived reality and identity, qualitative research methods were deemed necessary (Yow 1994). Moreover, given the dearth of literature available on civilian men and conflict, the research was guided by an inductive approach to methodology. As Blaikie (2009) notes, inductive research begins with the collection of data and proceeds to derive generalisations using inductive logic. It aims to describe social characteristics and the nature of regularities in social life. Such an approach can, therefore, produce theory and concepts which fit with the data and which are meaningfully relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Blaikie 2009).

However, while the theory which emerged from the research is rooted within the data, it has also been informed by previous scholarship (see Chapter 2). Rather than focusing on the development of an overarching theoretical claim, the research is informed by various interrelated concepts, and has sought to develop an empirically based theoretical understanding of the lives and identities of civilian men during conflict. Hence, whilst it has been guided by an inductive approach to methodology, the research is not limited to this methodological process (Schulz 2017)

In addition, the research has also been informed by what Hearn (1997: 50) has referred to as “critical studies on men.” Critical studies are said to be explicitly gendered and to proceed from both a pro-feminist standpoint and an awareness of political context (Hearn 1997; 2013).<sup>7</sup> As Ashe (2012) notes, they involve an analysis of male power and its impact upon women. Critical studies are said to differ from men’s studies, in that, male power and privilege are open to critical investigation. Moreover, as Ashe (2012) argues, critical studies can guide explorations of men and men’s power during periods of conflict transformation, and thus may also be considered to be of particular relevance to Northern Ireland.

Yet as Hearn (1997) notes, studying men risks creating new practices which forget women and the gendered power relations which exist between men and women, and thus even critical studies must be careful in order to avoid creating new bases of male power (Hearn 2013). It would seem imperative, therefore, that such studies also utilise a feminist lens so as to help ensure that gender inequality and subordination can also be recognised and challenged (Dowd 2008). However, while this research has been heavily influenced by both critical studies and feminist scholarship, it must be acknowledged that it primarily focuses on civilian men and their masculinities, given the extent to which research of this nature has thus far been neglected.

### **3.3 The Selection of Case Studies**

In order to enable an exploration of the complexities of the lives and identities of civilian men beyond the confines of just one site of conflict, and to facilitate an analysis of the continuum of men’s experiences in varied cultural settings, Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories were identified as appropriate sites

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<sup>7</sup> Hence, as studies of men that are critical, they are open to both women and men (Hearn 1997).

of analysis. These sites vary significantly in terms of time, space, and the characteristics of their respective conflicts, as is further explored below. It was felt however that examining these seemingly dissimilar sites had the potential to illustrate a range of conflict experiences which one site, or similar sites, may have been unable to capture. In this respect, therefore, their inclusion had the potential to aid a broader, cross-cultural understanding of civilian men and their masculinities conducive to a more extensive level of theorisation.

As Creswell (2009; 2013) states, case study research involves the in-depth study of a programme, event, activity or process through the examination of one or more cases. When properly carried out, Berg (2009) argues that case studies should be applicable not only to the events, individuals or groups involved, but should also further understanding about similar events, individuals or groups. It is argued, therefore, that selecting multiple cases can facilitate enhanced insight and theory building, as the researcher is in a stronger position to establish the circumstances within which a theory will hold (Berg 2009; Bryman 2012). Moreover, as Creswell (2013) asserts, multiple cases can also provide different perspectives on similar questions, thus locating localised issues within a wider frame of reference.

With regard to this research, investigating Northern Ireland provided an opportunity to explore how protracted, internal conflict within a western, liberal, democratic setting had impacted upon civilian men and their masculinities; while investigating the Occupied Territories allowed for an examination of how protracted conflict had impacted upon civilian men within a non-western, middle-eastern, site of occupation. While investigating the Occupied Territories enabled the exploration of a site of conflict which had very much been internationalised, the inclusion of Northern Ireland allowed for the examination of a conflict which had largely played out behind closed doors (McWilliams and Ni Aoláin 2013).<sup>8</sup>

However, while these conflict sites clearly differ significantly in a number of respects, similarities could also be identified. For example, both conflicts have been described as ethno-national in nature, (Yiftachel 2002; McGarry and O'Leary 1995; Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008; Edwards and McGrattan 2010), the roots of

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<sup>8</sup> As will be further discussed within Chapter 5, the British government did not formally acknowledge that an armed conflict was taking place in Northern Ireland, and instead claimed that the violence was due to heightened criminal disorder (McWilliams and Ni Aoláin 2013).

which may be found within settler-colonialism (Sharoni 2001; Tonge 2002; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a). In addition, both have been characterised as protracted (Edwards and McGrattan 2010; McDonald 2010), low-intensity conflicts (Muldoon 2004; Catignani 2005) which have been primarily waged within confined geographical areas (Ni Aoláin 2000; DellaPergola 2003). Both conflicts have had a significant impact upon their civilian populations and have resulted in substantial numbers of civilian deaths (Sutton 2001; Yiftachel 2002). The experiences of such populations have also been shaped to a significant extent by the construction of conflict architecture, such as military/police checkpoints, separation walls and military installations (Smyth 2004; Parsons and Salter 2008; Byrne et al. 2012; Weizman 2012).

The different timeframes of the respective conflicts may be seen to represent a methodological challenge. While the conflict continues to be part of the daily lives of those residing in the Occupied Territories, at the time of writing it has been more than twenty years since the signing of Northern Ireland's 1998 peace agreement.<sup>9</sup> Regarding Northern Ireland, one could argue that there is the potential for memories to fade and for the conflict to be viewed in a slightly different light, given the passage of time and the current political context. However, while political violence has decreased significantly (Mac Ginty et al. 2007), housing and educational segregation persist (Morrow et al. 2016; Wilson 2016), as do the physical barriers or peace walls which separate some of Northern Ireland's most troubled communities (Byrne et al. 2012). The impact of conflict, therefore, continues to linger and to have a profound effect on the everyday lives of the populace.

Moreover, as Yow (2014) notes, while factual information may fade with the passage of time, the fundamentals of experiences characterised by strong emotions tend to be well remembered. Indeed, with the passage of time it is argued that people may become more, rather than less candid about their experiences (Yow 1994). Hence, in this respect, the passage of time may actually have aided data gathering within Northern Ireland. Furthermore, examining Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories presented an opportunity to explore men's experiences and identities in a society currently experiencing violent conflict, and one which is in the process of

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<sup>9</sup> This agreement is commonly referred to as the Good Friday Agreement or the Belfast Agreement.

emerging from violent conflict, thus allowing for an additional level of analysis and theorisation.

In addition to methodological considerations, feasibility and practicality also influenced case selection. Carrying out research in Northern Ireland was a logical choice, in that, I am a native of the region and planned to be based there throughout the research process. By contrast, while I had long taken a keen interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I had no previous ties to the region, nor had I any ability to speak either Arabic or Hebrew. Understanding the politics and culture of the region thus represented a positive research challenge.

There were, however, a number of factors which made conducting research in the region feasible. Firstly, Israel-Palestine is a relatively accessible and much researched site of conflict. It is possible, for example, to travel within Israel with relative ease, while travel within the Occupied Territories is also possible with forward planning and a degree of caution.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, numerous members of staff at Ulster University's Transitional Justice Institute had long standing contacts within the region, and as a result I was able to conduct a week long scoping visit several months prior to commencing my fieldwork in September 2016. Such contacts, in addition to those which I established during my scoping visit, proved to be invaluable whilst conducting my fieldwork.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

The empirical data which underpins this research was collected between August 2016 and June 2017. A number of data collection techniques were utilised, including qualitative interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. In all, fifty-one qualitative interviews and two focus groups were conducted across both sites; the utilisation of multiple data collection techniques allowing for triangulation and a more rigorous approach to data validity and integrity (Ritchie 2003; Schulz 2017). The application of these techniques is explored in greater detail below.

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<sup>10</sup> Gaza of course is an exception to this.

### **3.4.1 Qualitative Interviews**

#### **The Interview Process within Northern Ireland**

As the in-depth interview offers the possibility of seeing the world of another and the meaning which they attach to lived experiences (Yow 1994), it was judged to be a data collection technique which could make a significant contribution to the research. Within Northern Ireland, twenty-three interviews were conducted with participants from both nationalist and unionist backgrounds who had been involved in a popular Northern Irish sport, namely boxing, either during or after the conflict period.<sup>11</sup> The participants included twenty-two males and one female, almost all of whom had been amateur or professional boxers in their youth. At the time of interview, the youngest participants were at least forty years old, and all but one had memories of growing up and/or pursuing the sport in the midst of conflict. Moreover, the majority of participants remained within the sport in a coaching, refereeing, or organisational capacity.

In theory, those from any walk of life who had experienced the Northern Irish conflict as civilians would have been eligible to participate in the research. It was felt, however, that recruiting participants through community-based boxing clubs offered several advantages. Firstly, boxing has, historically at least, been a highly masculinised sport within which the male body is central to the construction of identity masculinity (De Garis 2000; Woodward 2007). Secondly, boxing has been, and remains, a predominantly working-class sport (Sugden 1996), and hence the recruitment of participants involved in the sport would enable those from communities disproportionately affected by conflict violence to share their experiences (Coulter 1999).

Thirdly, there had been relatively little research conducted on how those involved in boxing experienced the Northern Irish conflict, and, hence, it was expected that the quality and quantity of data collected would not be adversely affected by research fatigue among participants. Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, there appeared to be somewhat of a consensus that boxing facilitated respectful contact between those from differing sides of the community/religious divide even in the midst of conflict (Sugden and Harvie 1995; Sugden 1996; Cronin 1997). It was thus anticipated that

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<sup>11</sup> Within the text these interviews are labelled 'NI Interview 1', 'NI Interview 2', etc.

exploring the dynamics within the sport could prove fruitful in terms of furthering our understanding of the interplay between masculinities, violent conflict, and peace.

Purposive and snowball sampling were utilised in order to identify and recruit participants. Initially, communication was established with a community activist who had contacts within the Belfast boxing community. A number of these contacts subsequently became participants, and eventually seventeen interviews were conducted with those from the greater Belfast area.<sup>12</sup> Contact was also made with a community activist who identified a number of potential participants within the greater Derry City area (also known as Londonderry), and in time six additional interviews were conducted within this locality. It must be noted, though, that the recruitment of participants within this context proved to be a relatively slow process and was not without its challenges, as will be further discussed below.

Just under half of all interviews were conducted in the boxing clubs to which the participants were (or had been) affiliated, the remainder taking place within the homes of participants or at local cafés. These interviews typically lasted for approximately forty-five minutes, with those conducted in boxing clubs usually being a little shorter due to the coaching or organisational responsibilities participants often had to undertake.

While an interview guide was developed in order to aid discussion, such exchanges often proved to be conversational in nature and participants would often express their opinions on matters of interest with minimal prompting. Twenty-two of the twenty-three interviews were digitally recorded, the exception being an interview which was carried out whilst the participant continued supervising those under his tutelage. Notes on this interview were subsequently written up after its completion.

### **The Interview Process within the Occupied Territories**

Purposive and snowball sampling was also used to identify and recruit participants within the Occupied Territories. Prior to commencing fieldwork in September 2016, contact had been established with several people working within Palestinian academic institutions. In addition, contact had also been made with a number of volunteers active within MachsomWatch (CheckpointWatch in English), an Israeli

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<sup>12</sup> One such participant had connections to (greater) Belfast's boxing community, but did not grow up or reside there at the time of interview. This interview was conducted via Skype.

organisation which monitors and reports human rights violations suffered by Palestinians at military checkpoints (Desivilya and Yassour-Borochowitz 2008). Upon the completion of fieldwork, interviews had been conducted with thirteen males and seven females who were either undertaking, or had recently completed their studies at universities located within the Occupied Territories; all of whom were in their late teens or early twenties at the time of interview. In addition, interviews were also conducted with two male staff members employed at Palestinian universities, as well as with a male lawyer/community activist and a male secondary school teacher. Moreover, an interview was conducted with a female member of staff working for an Israeli human rights organisation which advocates for the rights of Palestinians, while three interviews were carried out with female volunteers from MachsomWatch.

The majority of these interviews took place within the respective universities, while a small number were also carried out at the homes of participants or at local cafés.<sup>13</sup> These interviews were also carried out with the aid of an interview guide<sup>14</sup>, and were typically similar in length to those conducted within Northern Ireland. While the majority of the participants spoke very good English, on four occasions interviews were carried out with the help of a translator (fellow participants who had agreed to undertake such a role). All the interviews conducted within this context were digitally recorded.

Recruitment was primarily conducted within universities, and within the student cohort, for a number of reasons. Firstly, at a practical level, it was relatively easy to develop initial contact within those working within academic institutions, and such contacts were proficient in English. Secondly, many of the students at these institutions could also communicate in English, which greatly facilitated data collection. Thirdly, as many of the students were required to commute regularly from various areas of the Occupied Territories in order to reach their respective campuses, they were frequently required to interact with Israeli police/military personnel at checkpoints. As sites at which Israeli and Palestinian masculinities are reaffirmed in relation to each other (Hochberg 2010), and where masculine

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<sup>13</sup> Within the Occupied Territories three interviews were also conducted via phone/Skype, although in all of these cases I had also met those involved in person.

<sup>14</sup> In the context of the Occupied Territories adaptations to the interview guide were sometimes necessary in order to account for the more heterogeneous nature of participants.

humiliation may be of a particularly public nature (Foster 2011), it was felt that examining the dynamics at these sites had the potential to reveal much about military occupation and its impact upon the performance of masculinities.

My interest in the checkpoint regime, and what these sites could reveal about masculinities, conflict, and occupation, prompted me to seek, and subsequently conduct, interviews with MachsomWatch volunteers.<sup>15</sup> I felt that their input would prove valuable in gaining a better understanding of the workings and dynamics of checkpoints, and this proved to be the case. Moreover, their input (and that of the aforementioned female member of staff whose work involved checkpoint monitoring/intervention) also provided both a female and a particular type of Israeli perspective on the gendered dynamics of checkpoints and the occupation more broadly. Finally, interviews with the aforementioned male staff members were undertaken in order to enable the narratives of students to be located within a slightly broader context, and their contributions proved to be both insightful and revealing in their own right.

### **The Benefits of Variance**

While the demographics of the Northern Irish participants clearly differed significantly from those recruited within the Occupied Territories, such variance facilitated an examination of men's conflict experiences in relation to various markers of identity. For example, while the Northern Irish participants were almost exclusively from working-class backgrounds, participants from the Occupied Territories were pursuing (or had pursued) third level education, and, hence, were relatively more privileged in this respect. Moreover, while those from Northern Ireland were at least forty years old at the time of interview (and some considerably older), the majority of those from the Occupied Territories were in their late teens or early twenties, therefore across both sites men of all ages are represented.

In addition, as described above, while Northern Irish participants were almost exclusively male, there were a significant number of women recruited within the Occupied Territories which thus allowed for female perspectives on men, masculinities, and conflict to be incorporated within the research. However, while

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<sup>15</sup> On several occasions I also accompanied MachsomWatch volunteers as they carried out their monitoring activities at checkpoints, as is further discussed below.

recruiting differing groups of research participants at quite different sites of conflict added to the validity of the data (Yin 2016), it also required significantly more time, effort and flexibility in order to ensure that men's conflict-related experiences and identities were explored and analysed in a comparable manner.

### **3.4.2 Focus Group Discussion**

In addition to the semi-structured interviews conducted within the Occupied Territories, two focus group discussions were also carried out with students within context. As Pini and Pease (2013) note, focus groups are another method which can be used to gather information about men's lives, and the interactions between participants may allow for the political and social context to be presented in a slightly different way (Schulz 2017). One focus group was conducted at a university located within the West Bank, while the other was carried out at an academic institution located in East Jerusalem. The first group comprised of four male and two female students, while the second group was comprised of six male students. Both discussions lasted for approximately forty-five minutes and were digitally recorded, the questions discussed being similar to those posed during individual interviews with students. Both focus groups were facilitated by contacts established prior to the commencement of fieldwork, with my contact for the second group also acting as a translator during the discussion.

I found the data which derived from the focus groups to be of value in a number of ways. Firstly, the interactions between participants allowed gender issues to be discussed in a relatively open and relaxed manner, something which at times proved difficult during one-to-one interviews. Secondly, it was interesting to note where the participants reached consensus on various issues, and indeed where they found humour within the discussions, with such observations proving beneficial in terms of aiding my understanding of the collective Palestinian experience. Lastly, the data which emerged from such discussions echoed that collected during individual interviews, and thus served to reinforce the validity of such data.

### **3.4.3 Participant Observation**

During my time in the field I also paid close attention to what I saw, heard and, indeed, experienced. This form of data collection, often referred to as participant observation, is central to ethnographic research and enables the researcher to better

comprehend the thoughts, habits and social structures within a given cultural setting (Punch 2014). Whilst collecting such data, the researcher is both a participant and an observer of the social life of a group or community (Punch 2014). As Yin (2016) notes, observations of this nature allow the researcher to see and perceive at first-hand what others may have spoken of or written about, and thus can be an invaluable source of primary data.

In order to generate data of this nature, my observations in the field were noted in a research journal. Notes of this kind, which are commonly referred to as field notes, often describe social interactions and the context within which they occurred (Montgomery and Bailey 2007). Moreover, as Mulhall (2003) notes, they also permit the influence which the physical environment exerts upon social life to be both considered and communicated. While this form of data collection may be subject to the interpretation of the researcher more so than data derived from interviews or focus groups (Mulhall 2003), I nevertheless found that recording and reflecting upon my observations in the field helped to distil my thinking and enabled me to reflect upon the cultural nuances which could not be captured via the spoken word.

While I had grown up in Northern Ireland and had resided there for most of my life, I had not had any previous engagement with the world of boxing prior to the commencement of my fieldwork. Observing and noting my experiences at boxing clubs thus proved to be highly beneficial in terms of developing my understanding of the culture of the sport within this context. For example, such notes documented how the walls of boxing clubs were often adorned with the portraits of famous boxing figures from days gone by, mythologised like ancient warriors to inspire the next generation of pugilists.<sup>16</sup> In addition, they also recorded my perceptions of the interactions between the pugilists and their coaches, and my surprise at the inclusive and nurturing nature of these (primarily) masculine environments.

During my time in the Occupied Territories my observations and reflections were particularly detailed and reflected my attempts to comprehend an entirely new cultural environment, as well as the reality of ongoing conflict and occupation. For example, I found that the observations I recorded after conducting interviews at the

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<sup>16</sup> As Woodward (2007) notes, boxing and boxing masculinities are rooted within histories and mythologies related to the desire to locate oneself in relation to one's roots and the past.

homes of participants enabled me to better understand Palestinian culture and worldview, including gender dynamics within the home and the centrality of the (extended) family within Palestinian society. I also made quite extensive observations on the things that struck me as I enjoyed my free time in Jerusalem, including the spatial complexities of living cheek by jowl with the other, and the clear discrepancy in living standards between the East and West of the city. Moreover, my travels within the West Bank, including my tour of the Checkpoint regime with MachsomWatch and my tour of Hebron with Breaking the Silence,<sup>17</sup> also provided much food for thought and contextualisation. It was perhaps, however, on the occasions which I visited the Qalandia and Bethlehem 300 checkpoints with MachsomWatch volunteers when observing and noting my experiences, that proved particularly invaluable, enabling me to capture my thoughts and feelings in relation to these quite remarkable sites of security and/or subjugation.<sup>18</sup>

Within both sites many of the informal conversations I had were most interesting and often reinforced what participants had said during formal interviews. Indeed, on some occasions the comments made by participants after the recorder had been switched off were spoken with a freedom and candour which the recorder had seemingly inhibited, and, hence, were well worth noting down for future reference. While these comments could not be directly utilised within the research, I nevertheless often drew upon them in order to further inform my thinking and understanding.

### **3.5 Reflexivity and Positionality**

As Nencel (2014) asserts, reflexivity involves an acknowledgement of the complexities involved in the creation of data and an appreciation that there is no simple fit between the social world and its ethnographic representation. Reflexive analyses and practices are thus intimately linked to the researcher's epistemological standpoint (Nencel 2014). Within reflexive analysis it is understood that researchers are not merely neutral observers but are also marked by their own gender, class and ethnic identities (Lohan 2000). While reflective practice is common within feminist

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<sup>17</sup> Breaking the Silence is an organisation comprised of former Israeli veterans who seek to inform the Israeli public about the reality of life within the Occupied Territories (Breaking the Silence, no date available).

<sup>18</sup> My observations at these sites are discussed at greater length in Chapters 7 and 8.

scholarship (Lohan 2000; Swaine 2011; Nencel 2014), most social science research conducted by men has not considered how the positionality of the researcher has impacted upon the material produced (Cowburn 2013). Hence, as Hearn (1998) notes, there is also a need for male researchers to critically reflect on their own identities during the research process.

Reflexive analysis thus allows for the positionality of the researcher to be deconstructed (Nencel 2014), and for their role in the co-creation of data to be acknowledged (Cowburn 2013). In short, this form of analysis concedes that the positionality of the researcher will have a significant bearing on research outcomes (Blaikie 2009). Moreover, feminist methodologies more broadly depart from mainstream social science methodologies, in that, the identities of the subject and the object are not viewed as distinct and fixed, but as developing simultaneously during the research process (Lohan 2000). Within such scholarship, therefore, participation and the co-creation of knowledge has long been favoured over detachment from research participants (Lohan 2000; Nencel 2014). However, while reflexive practices commonly found within feminist writings have sought to remove the category of “privileged knowers,” they have not attempted to deny the validity of scientific claims arising from such forms of research (Lohan 2000: 171).

### **Positionality within Northern Ireland (Insider)**

Convinced by the merits of reflexive analysis, I sought to both critically examine my own positionality within the research process, and also to ensure that I regarded my participants as co-creators in the process of knowledge production. With regard to my own positionality, I found that some aspects of my identity which appeared to have a significant bearing on the research process differed according to cultural context. Within Northern Ireland for example, I generally considered myself to be what Hermann (2001: 82) has referred to as an “insider”. As Hermann (2001: 82) points out, insiders within conflict-affected contexts are thought to have a distinct advantage at the data gathering stage of the research, and are especially well placed to gather data on their “own side.”

Certainly, my insider knowledge of Northern Ireland’s cultural terrain meant that I was very aware of the complexities involved in data gathering within this context. I was aware, for example, of the intricacies of Northern Ireland’s ethnic geographies,

and of how my research may be perceived by those on either side of the community/religious divide. My identity as an insider, however, meant that I could not claim to be in any way removed from the society's conflictual dynamics, or to be ignorant of the realities of life there. Furthermore, any protestations to the contrary would have been nullified by the perception of my positionality in the eyes of my research participants.

For example, by simply revealing my name to participants or potential participants, they would have been able to deduce that I was from a Catholic/nationalist background, and, hence, in all probability would have assumed my political leanings and interpretation of the region's recent conflict. While my positionality in this respect may have aided my ability to recruit participants from the Catholic/nationalist community, I feel that it somewhat inhibited my ability to recruit or gain the trust of those from the Protestant/unionist community. In fact, whilst contacting potential participants from the Protestant/unionist community, I found myself emphasising that my research was particularly interested in the ways in which boxing had succeeded in transcending sectarian divisions during the conflict. Perhaps subconsciously it was my way of attempting to assure such participants that I did not have an overt political agenda, nor did I seek to threaten or undermine their political convictions.

Despite this, however, there were occasions when I felt that participants/potential participants from the Protestant/unionist community may have felt somewhat threatened by the research and my (perceived) positionality within it. For instance, on one occasion a potential participant from this community, whom I subsequently learned had strong views in relation to the future direction of Northern Irish boxing, declined to participate in the research or to suggest other potential participants. While there may have been a number of reasons for this, it was perhaps the case that he felt that I was unlikely to share his political aspirations as they related to the future of the sport, or that the research would serve to validate such aspirations. On another occasion, a member of the Protestant/unionist community, whilst willingly participating in the research, appeared to be relatively guarded in his responses and somewhat unwilling to discuss anything which may have been considered sensitive. Indeed, after the interview had been concluded the participant expressed the hope

that he had not caused any offence, and was reassured that absolutely none had been taken.

However, as noted above, while my positionality as someone from the Catholic/nationalist community appeared to aid my ability to recruit and gain the trust of participants from this tradition, it also meant that such participants would sometimes appear to presume that I agreed with their political views as they related to boxing. In particular, the future direction of Northern Irish boxing and the emergence of the Northern Irish Boxing Association (NIBA) evoked strong feelings among such participants,<sup>19</sup> and at times comments of a somewhat derogatory nature were made about those from the Protestant/unionist community who were in support of the formation of this association. While I, as a researcher, was careful not to express any personal views on the matter, I felt I was much more likely to elicit comments of this nature from such participants solely on account of my community/religious background. In short, therefore, my positionality, as it was perceived by those from the Catholic/nationalist community also presented its own challenges and had an influence on the data which emerged.

### **Positionality within the Occupied Territories (Outsider)**

My positionality within the Occupied Territories was significantly different. Within this context I was very much an “outsider” (Hermann 2001: 82), and hence, in comparison with Northern Ireland I did not feel implicated in the region’s conflict to the same extent. Although outsiders may lack an in-depth or instinctual knowledge of a society’s conflictual dynamics, Hermann (2001) argues that they may be more adept at recognising features which tend to be found within all violent conflicts, and may be more capable of producing a more balanced analysis. Hence, as Swaine (2011) notes, their ability to take a more critical and analytical view means that outsiders are not necessarily less effective at carrying out research within conflicted societies.

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<sup>19</sup> In 2013 an independent investigation found there had been “incidents of sectarianism and racism” within the sport, following complaints from those within the Sandy Row Boxing Club, a club located within a staunchly unionist/loyalist area of Belfast (Kelly 2017). The club claimed that it had suffered a decade of “chronic sectarianism” whilst boxing in nationalist areas, and demanded the establishment of a new Northern Ireland Boxing Association (NIBA). The Stormont Assembly supported its establishment (McNeilly 2013), and the association was subsequently formed.

The fact that I was an outsider, however, did not mean that my positionality within this context was value free. Despite the fact that I presented myself as Irish, it is probable that the participants primarily regarded me as a white European from a nation that was perhaps indistinguishable from the one which had held Palestine as a mandate in the aftermath of World War One. Therefore, in all likelihood, the assumptions of participants in relation to my identity as a researcher were probably shaped more by societal experiences of colonialism than they were by any knowledge of the ongoing interest in the plight of Palestinians among the Northern Irish Catholic/nationalist community. With this in mind I was therefore conscious of the need to avoid re-creating colonial type encounters with my participants (Asad 1979), and was thus careful to convey that I was there not as an expert but as someone who was eager to understand and learn from a conflict-affected society other than my own.

As an outsider, it often felt as if the participants were very keen for me to understand just how difficult it was to live under military occupation, and to face the seemingly innumerable challenges associated with the absence of a Palestinian state and the denial of fundamental rights. Moreover, there was also a concern with how Palestinians were portrayed in the international media, and a sense that they had been largely abandoned by the international community. Hence, participating in the research, at least to some extent, presented participants with an opportunity to air their grievances and challenge the perception that Palestinians were fundamentally irrational and violent. In this respect, therefore, it can also be said that my identity as an outsider undoubtedly had an influence on the data which emerged within this context.

### **3.5.1 Gender and Positionality**

During the research process I was also very aware of the need to reflect upon how my identity as a male had an impact upon the collection of data and its subsequent analysis (Hearn 1998; Cowburn 2013). In terms of data collection, it has been acknowledged that the interview is not merely a site for the representation of gender identities, but is also a context within which gender relations are performed (Lohan 2000). As Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) emphasise, the interview may represent an opportunity for the signifying of masculinity, or may be a site within which

masculinity is threatened, particularly if the nature of the questions hint at the illusionary nature of the masculine self. Interviews, therefore, are contexts within which masculinities may be reproduced or challenged (Hearn 2013).

While it is important for male researchers not to engage in collusion or to condone harmful representations of masculinity whilst interviewing men (Hearn 1997), it is also important to ensure that the male identity of the participant is not challenged to the extent that the very success of the interview is jeopardised (Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2001). It is argued, for example, that men often attempt to conceal their emotions and vulnerabilities in order to protect their male identities, which can make gathering data on the emotional lives of men somewhat challenging (Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2001). It is also well documented that men often prefer to talk to about their personal or emotional lives with women rather than men, perhaps because the perceived threat to their male identities is judged to be reduced during such interactions (Lohan 2000). In this respect, then, it would appear particularly difficult for the male researcher to balance the need to avoid collusion with participants, whilst also ensuring that they feel sufficiently secure in their male identities to freely express their thoughts and feelings.

### **Gendered Positionality within Northern Ireland**

During my time in the field, I experienced at first-hand the complexities involved in exploring masculinities as a male researcher. Within Northern Ireland for example, I sometimes got the sense that my (male) participants related to me as a male, i.e. as someone who could instinctively appreciate the myths and legends of boxing as they related to male identity. In this sense, therefore, while my knowledge of boxing from a purely sporting perspective was peripheral at best, my identity as a male appeared to enable participants to trust my ability to grasp the integral role that this highly masculine sport had played in their lives. Hence, while I was not colluding with such participants in the sense that I was condoning attitudes or behaviours associated with harmful or toxic forms of masculinity, I felt that as a male researcher I was perhaps serving to validate their masculinities as fashioned through the pursuit of boxing.

However, perhaps in part because the participants felt that their masculinities were being validated rather than threatened, there were also moments during which they

displayed something of their inner lives and vulnerabilities. John,<sup>20</sup> for instance, described how his father had lost his life during the conflict and how he had subsequently grown up in abject poverty; his colleagues in the surrounding offices remaining oblivious to such biographical details.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Andrew spoke of how, although boxing had played an integral role in his life, he felt that his devotion to the sport had contributed to the subsequent breakdown of his marriage. A number of participants, too, spoke about their relationships with their fathers, and how the nature of these sometimes difficult relationships had subsequently shaped the course of their lives (Interviews with Matthew, Gavin, and Harry). Within such narratives, both vulnerability and also strength were readily apparent.

Furthermore, at a personal level there were also times when I felt rather vulnerable with regard to my own masculine identity whilst carrying out research within this context. Prior to commencing my fieldwork, I was somewhat apprehensive about how my scholarly and perhaps more middle-class masculine identity would be received among participants who, I assumed, would exhibit more muscular, rugged and working-class forms of male identity. Moreover, when I conducted interviews within boxing gyms, particularly whilst training sessions were ongoing, I often felt very much out of place and that my form of masculinity was of little significance within such environments. Despite this, however, my interactions with participants proceeded within a spirit of deep respect and at no time was I made to feel that my masculine identity was inferior on account of my relative youth, class, or lack of sporting ability. In fact, the forms of masculinity which the participants embodied were often much more inclusive, nurturing and considerate than I had previously anticipated, as will be discussed at greater length in subsequent chapters.

### **Gendered Positionality within the Occupied Territories**

My positionality as a male research also had a significant influence upon my interactions with participants from the Occupied Territories, and hence upon the nature of the subsequent data. Within this context, for example, I often found it easier to discuss gender relations and male identities with female participants, as finding the right words to discuss matters of this nature with the male participants

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<sup>20</sup> In order to protect their identities, the names of participants have been changed throughout, and those cited are thus pseudonyms.

<sup>21</sup> This interview took place at John's place of work.

often seemed to be something of a struggle. On a couple of occasions during interviews with male participants I sensed that they may have felt somewhat threatened by the nature of the discussion; perhaps because they felt that the disempowering or even emasculating effects of ongoing conflict and occupation were being highlighted, and thus that the vulnerability of their own masculine identities were becoming more apparent (Student Interview 16; Staff Interview 3).

By contrast, I do not recall any of the Northern Irish participants giving the impression that they perceived their male identities to be under threat, and certainly the interviews conducted in Northern Ireland often felt more personal and intimate in nature. There may have been a number of reasons for this. Firstly, within Northern Ireland I frequently contacted potential participants directly in order to ask them to participate in the research, while within the Occupied Territories participants usually expressed their willingness to contribute to the research via an intermediary, usually a member of staff at a Palestinian university. As a result, I often did not have the opportunity to build up any kind of rapport with participants from the Occupied Territories prior to interview. Secondly, the nature of the interviews conducted in Northern Ireland meant that participants were asked to reflect upon their lives as boxers and/or boxing coaches, which appeared to facilitate the generation of data which was more reflective and personal in nature. By contrast, as a result of the ongoing nature of conflict and occupation within the Occupied Territories, the interviews conducted there did not require participants to be quite as historically reflective, which may have thus served to somewhat depersonalise the nature of such interactions.

Thirdly, while the nature of the questions posed to the Northern Irish participants were based around their pursuit of boxing, i.e. a sport which had served to enhance their masculine identities, participants from the Occupied Territories were asked about their life experiences as they related to the potentially emasculating effects of ongoing conflict and occupation. Hence, as suggested above, the potential for such questions to be seen to represent a threat to the masculine self was significantly increased within this context. Finally, the fact that the Northern Irish participants were on average several decades older than their Palestinian counterparts may have meant that they were more secure in their (male) identities, thus reducing their need to react to perceived threats. Despite this, however, I felt that the data which

emerged from the Occupied Territories proved to be rich and had much to reveal in relation to conflict, occupation, and male identity and vulnerability.<sup>22</sup>

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

#### **3.6.1 The Wellbeing of Participants**

As Campbell (2010) notes, ethical research requires that researchers respect the autonomy of participants and ensure that they are protected from harm. Researchers bear significant responsibility towards their participants, and ensuring their wellbeing often involves the researcher making potentially fraught moral judgements (Wood 2006). Thus, ethical decision-making during the research process can often prove difficult (Swaine 2011), and the ethical challenges faced by researchers tend to be heightened and amplified within conflict-affected contexts (Campbell 2010).

#### **Informed Consent**

Given the challenges associated with research within conflicted societies, measures were put in place to help ensure that this research was conducted in a sensitive and ethical manner.<sup>23</sup> Firstly, as Campbell (2010) notes, researchers have an obligation to enable potential participants to make fully informed decisions regarding their participation. I thus attempted to ensure that participants were well informed about the nature of the research prior to giving their consent to partake. Within Northern Ireland, this usually involved informing participants about my position and the nature of the research by telephone. If they then expressed a willingness to contribute to the research, interview arrangements were subsequently made. On a number of occasions prior to interview participants were provided with an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix I) and a Subject Information Sheet (see Appendix II) via email. Normally, however, participants read these, or were at least given the opportunity to read these, immediately before the interview itself.

As described above, within the context of the Occupied Territories most participants initially expressed their willingness to contribute to the research via intermediaries.

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<sup>22</sup> See Chapters 7 and 8.

<sup>23</sup> This research proposal was peer reviewed and considered by the Ulster University's Research Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of fieldwork (REC/16/0009).

As a result, I strived to ensure that these individuals were as well informed about the nature of the research as possible, and that they had copies of the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix I) and the Subject Information Sheet (see Appendix III).<sup>24</sup> On a number of occasions, individual participants were also emailed such forms prior to interview. However, as was the case within Northern Ireland, it was more usual for participants to have the opportunity to read these forms immediately before the interview commenced.

At this point, the participants of both contexts were reminded that they could stop the interview at any time, and that they were at liberty to withdraw from the research entirely at any point prior to its submission to the university. Moreover, they were encouraged to contact me after the completion of the interview if they had lingering queries or concerns. Prior to interview participants were also asked to provide oral, rather than written confirmation of their willingness to participate in the research, as it was judged that this would reduce their risk of being identified (as is further discussed below).

However, perhaps in part because I did not ask participants for written consent, few expressed a desire to actually read either the Subject Information Sheet or Informed Consent Form. In fact, on one occasion a participant described how these forms had served to heighten, rather than allay his concerns in relation to his participation. Despite this, however, the participant expressed a willingness to contribute to the study and appeared somewhat reassured to know that information and consent forms of this nature were now a standard part of academic practice.

### **Anonymity and Data Protection**

As suggested above, those who participated in the research were assured that their identities would remain anonymous. To this end, all participants have been attributed pseudonyms, and information which could potentially lead to their identification has been minimised throughout. It was also of critical importance that data was handled in a responsible manner (Campbell 2010), and during fieldwork interview data was removed from my digital recorder and saved onto password protected devices as soon as possible. I was also careful to ensure that handwritten

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<sup>24</sup> The Subject Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form were also translated into Arabic in order to help ensure that the Palestinian participants were fully aware of the nature and purpose of the research.

field notes did not contain particularly sensitive information and that they were typed up and saved on such devices soon after their creation. Moreover, documents containing the names and contact details of participants were encrypted in order to help prevent such information falling into the wrong hands.

I was particularly aware of the need to ensure that the Israeli authorities could not identify my participants or those who had assisted my research within the Occupied Territories. I had heard from colleagues, for example, that it was not uncommon for the authorities at airports to ask whether or not one had contacts within the Palestinian community, and if so to identify such persons. A colleague at the research institute I was staying at in East Jerusalem told of how she had been asked by the airport authorities to log into her emails so as to confirm that she had not been in contact with Palestinians during her stay in the region. For fear that I would find myself in a similar situation upon my departure, I went to considerable lengths to ensure that my emails, phone contacts and social media accounts did not contain information which could have potentially identified those with whom I had been in contact. While such fears proved to be unfounded, they were nevertheless ever present during my time in the Occupied Territories.

### **Emotional Wellbeing**

I was also aware of my responsibilities with regard to the emotional wellbeing of participants, and in particular of the need to avoid the potential for re-traumatisation (Wood 2006; Campbell 2010). To this end, I attempted to be mindful of their emotions and sensitivities, and to conduct interviews in a respectful and transparent manner. Moreover, I was also aided, in that, my research was not focused on specific harms, but on the gendered dynamics of everyday life within conflict-affected contexts.

Despite this however, on a few occasions participants did speak about events which clearly had a significant or even traumatising impact upon them. Specifically, within the context of the Occupied Territories, I would often sense that the mood of participants was somewhat lower by the end of the interviews than it had been at the beginning. By contrast, the interviews conducted in Northern Ireland were often of a joyful tone, as many of the participants expressed how boxing had enriched their lives even in the midst of violent conflict. However, as Campbell (2010) notes, the

experience of emotional pain during interviews does not mean interviewees are unwilling to participate in, or benefit from, the research, and, indeed, upon occasion participants from the Occupied Territories would express their gratitude that I was carrying out work of this nature.

### **3.6.2 The Wellbeing of the Researcher**

In addition to minimising the risks which to participants were exposed, I was also conscious of the need to take my own safety and wellbeing into account, particularly whilst I was based in the Occupied Territories. Before travelling to the territories, I spoke with several researchers and activists who had previously lived and worked there and who kindly offered practical advice on issues such as data security and personal safety. My scoping visit with colleagues of Ulster University prior to the commencement of fieldwork also enabled me to familiarise myself with the region's public transport system, travel to and from the West Bank via Israeli checkpoints, and to find a place in which to stay during the data gathering phase of the research. As I embarked upon this phase I was therefore better prepared for what lay ahead, and thus better equipped to make informed decisions regarding my personal safety.

### **Reflections on Safety, Vulnerability and Gender**

Despite this, however, there were times during my fieldwork when I was somewhat concerned about my personal safety. On two separate occasions, for example, I found myself in Ramallah after the last bus to Jerusalem had seemingly departed. On one such occasion, the participant I had previously interviewed waited with me at the dark and almost deserted bus station until, much to my relief, the Jerusalem bus arrived. On the other occasion, I had been invited to a participant's home in Jericho in order to conduct an interview. After the interview had been completed the participant suggested that he could drive me back to Ramallah so that I could catch the Jerusalem bound bus. However, upon arrival we were informed that the last bus had already departed, which caused me to feel a degree of concern. As the participant was not permitted to take his car across the border into Israel,<sup>25</sup> he kindly suggested that we drive to the border, cross the checkpoint on foot, and then get a taxi to leave me off at my place of residence in East Jerusalem. Surpassing all expectations, the participant accompanied me in the taxi until I arrived at my

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<sup>25</sup> Here Israel also refers to occupied East Jerusalem.

destination, at which point I thanked him and wished him a safe journey back to Jericho.

While these may be considered relatively mundane experiences, they do illustrate something of the vulnerability which one can experience whilst conducting research in a relatively unfamiliar conflict-affected context. They also illustrate how dependent one can be upon the local knowledge and practical assistance of research participants (Wood 2006), and on numerous other occasions I had reason to avail of such forms of aid. Moreover, they serve to highlight the extent to which the relationships between researchers and participants are not necessarily characterised by the superior power of the former group, but that the latter group can also exercise considerable power and agency and take up various positionalities (Schulz 2017). Hence, while the power within such relationships may often be stacked in favour of the researcher, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge that such power may be renegotiated (Lohan 2000), and challenged.

Moreover, while I was very much aware, in a general sense, of my own vulnerability within the Occupied Territories as an outsider and a relatively inexperienced researcher, one experience in particular during my time there caused me feel quite a profound sense of vulnerability. I share it here as I feel it speaks to many of the themes discussed above, including the safety of the researcher, the power of research participants/assistants, and in a broader sense to the utilisation of gender and vulnerability in order to protect oneself from the effects of conflict-related violence.

I had arranged to meet a MachsomWatch volunteer at 5am at a location adjacent to the Bethlehem 300 checkpoint between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Upon arrival I disembarked from the taxi and looked around to see if I could spot my contact. Initially, however, we failed to locate each other, and as I saw a mass of Palestinian men of working-age making their way up the street in the relative darkness I began to feel quite profoundly insecure. It was clear to passers-by that I was out of place, possibly lost, and certainly not Palestinian. My mind raced for fear that someone would take advantage of the vulnerable position I found myself in, or that someone would perceive me as Israeli, the potential consequences of which I was unsure of.

A few moments later however a small, older woman of European descent called my name. As I approached it was clear she was walking with a limp, and she asked if I could assist her as we walked towards the checkpoint. As we walked together, she linked her arm into mine so as to utilise it as a source of support. While walking against the predominant direction of travel in relative darkness remained a somewhat unnerving experience, I was comforted by the fact that I was no longer the only person there who was clearly somewhat out of place. Furthermore, perhaps quite selfishly, I took comfort from the fact that I was with a woman who was both in her senior years and somewhat infirm; someone who could not hope to adequately defend herself in the event of some form of attack. Moreover, not only was I in the company of this woman, but I was aiding her mobility and, hence, I too was impacted by her frailty and relative vulnerability.

My comfort, therefore, was rooted in the belief that an attack on this woman, or upon me, would represent a profound betrayal of social norms. I was thus of the opinion that her frailty and vulnerability would actually serve to reduce the likelihood that either of us would be subjected to any form of attack. Conversely, therefore, while this woman may have been quite frail in a physical sense, I felt that she was able to utilise her agency and perceived vulnerability in order to help ensure her safety and indeed mine, and thus in this sense was much more powerful than I was within this context. This example, therefore, again serves to highlight the extent to which researchers are not necessarily always in a position of superior power vis-a-vis those who assist with, or contribute to, their research.

Furthermore, while the likelihood that I would have been subjected to an attack had I approached the checkpoint alone may have been relatively remote, the experience caused me to reflect upon the themes of vulnerability and protection more broadly. It occurred to me that the ability to draw upon one's perceived vulnerability, whether due to age, gender, or infirmity, can often help to ensure that one is afforded some form of protection; not least within conflict-affected societies. By contrast, as has been previously discussed within Chapter 2, those who are devoid of such perceived vulnerabilities, such as young, able-bodied men, often have no recourse to such

forms of protection and, hence, are in fact much more vulnerable to the effects of conflict violence.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Emotional Impact of Conflict Research**

During the data gathering phase of the research I was also mindful of the impact that living within an active conflict zone was having upon my mental and emotional wellbeing. Seeing soldiers and also citizens carrying large guns on the streets of Jerusalem, for instance, was not something to which I was particularly accustomed to, despite my own experiences of living within a society emerging from conflict.<sup>27</sup> Their presence appeared to suggest that violence could erupt at any moment, and that one could lose one's life in the blink of an eye. I therefore often felt a sense of acute unease lest I was to find myself at the wrong place at the wrong time, or inadvertently arouse the suspicion of the Israeli security forces.

Moreover, two incidents which occurred relatively close to my place of residence in East Jerusalem served to further exacerbate my concerns. During the first incident a Jordanian man was shot and killed by Israeli security forces at Damascus Gate after allegedly attempting to carry out a knife attack (Ma'an News Agency 2016).<sup>28</sup> While I did not personally witness this incident, I arrived in the area to find large numbers of seemingly startled people moving in the opposite direction and the scene cordoned off by the Israeli security forces (Field Notes, 16<sup>th</sup> September '16).

During the second incident I was working at my place of residence in Sheikh Jarrah when I heard a number of loud bangs. These bangs were identified as gunshots, and the staff there hastily locked the external doors and warned residents not to venture outside. Some time later it transpired that a Palestinian man had carried out drive-by shootings at a light rail stop and a traffic intersection, killing one person and injuring others. As he fled by car, he made his way towards the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood pursued by police. In the gun battle that followed an Israeli policeman subsequently lost his life before the attacker was also shot and killed (Hasson et al. 2016).

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<sup>26</sup> The relative vulnerability of men of battle age within conflicted societies, with reference to Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, is further discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

<sup>27</sup> I also found having my travel documents inspected by heavily armed security personnel whilst crossing checkpoints by bus to be quite an intimidating experience.

<sup>28</sup> Damascus Gate is one of eight gates to the Old City of Jerusalem (Stiles 2018).

Both of these incidents filled me with both shock and sadness, and brought home the reality of living and conducting research within an active conflict zone. I was fortunate, however, that I could discuss these troubling events with my fellow residents, and the friendships that I formed there proved to be a great source of support during my time in the Occupied Territories. I also found that writing about these events was helpful in terms of processing the difficult thoughts and emotions which they had triggered. More broadly, events such as these serve to illustrate the importance of taking one's emotional wellbeing into account and of engaging in self-care whilst undertaking research within violent and troubled settings. That this is being increasingly recognised within scholarship can be only be regarded as a positive development (see Wood 2006).

### **3.6.3 Giving Back**

Finally, in order to ensure that the benefits of research within conflicted societies are equitably shared, those who conduct it must attempt to ensure that they give something back to both the individuals and communities who facilitated its completion (Wood 2006: Campbell 2010). In one sense, enabling the participants to tell their stories and have their voices heard may be thought of as giving something back. Beyond this, however, it is important that those who contributed to the research are kept abreast of developments and are given access to the research once it has been completed. To this end, participants and those who assisted with the research will, as far as possible, be informed of its completion and will be provided with a copy of the final manuscript, and/or a summary of the key findings. Moreover, the completed research will be also be disseminated among civil society organisations working within the communities from which the data originated, and will be shared more broadly with those working on issues related to gender and conflict within both academic and policy circles.

## **3.7 Research Challenges**

### **3.7.1 Challenges within Northern Ireland**

As was to be expected, various challenges arose during the course of the research, not least during the data gathering phase. In particular, this phase of the research took much longer to complete than I had anticipated. This was primarily due to the length of time it took to identify and recruit participants within Northern Ireland.

Initially, I tried simply calling potential participants via phone numbers that were publicly available, but this proved to be unsuccessful. Eventually, however, as described above, contact was established with a figure that was well known within both the community sector and the boxing fraternity, and his intervention proved fruitful.

After the first interviews had been completed, snowball sampling (as described above) was primarily used in order to identify and recruit participants. However, at various stages the trail went cold and I was forced to find alternative ways of identifying and recruiting participants. On a number of occasions, this again involved seeking the assistance of those active within the community sector and/or academia and who also had contacts within boxing. Again, such assistance proved fruitful and I eventually managed to recruit enough participants in order to reach the point of saturation.

Recruiting participants within Northern Ireland was however arduous and in all the gathering of data within this context took approximately eight months to complete. A possible reason for this is that, as one participant opined, the world of boxing may be considered relatively closed, and perhaps somewhat suspicious of the motivations of outsiders. While I certainly did not experience this at an interpersonal level,<sup>29</sup> it did appear to be the case that potential participants were more likely to express their willingness to contribute to the research if they had been briefed by a member of the community sector, or if they had been recommended to me by one of their (boxing) colleagues.

At a more practical level, however, while most participants did suggest at least one colleague whom they believed would be willing to contribute to the research, numerous participants failed to do so, which undoubtedly delayed the gathering of data. A possible reason for this is that as a relatively under-researched community, many were not familiar with the practices associated with academic research, or with my reliance upon them to facilitate the recruitment of other participants. It may also have been the case that, due to the personal/biographical nature of the interviews, some participants may have been reluctant to suggest other individuals lest they

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<sup>29</sup> Indeed, many of the Northern Irish participants were friendly, most generous with their time, and very open about their experiences within boxing both during and after the conflict.

come to know that they had discussed matters of such a nature with a relative stranger. Hence, while they may have been willing to be open, even vulnerable, during interviews,<sup>30</sup> they may have been unwilling to allow others to know they had permitted themselves to be thus. If this was the case, it serves to illustrate how unwilling men can be to show vulnerability, particularly to other men, lest it be perceived as somehow weak or feminine (Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2001).

### **3.7.2 Challenges within the Occupied Territories**

By contrast, while the gathering of data within the Occupied Territories was completed within a relatively short period of time (September-November 2016), there were also various challenges associated with its collection. For example, when I arrived in Jerusalem in early September, my primary contact, who had agreed to assist within the recruitment of participants, informed me that he was travelling abroad later that week and would not return until early October. In the meantime, I was forced to explore other ways in which contacts could be developed and participants recruited, lest I was unable to gather a sufficient amount of data during my stay. While this fear ultimately proved to be groundless, the development of contacts and the recruitment of participants within this context also required a degree of patience, perseverance, and ingenuity.

Moreover, some of the practical and logistical challenges associated with the occupation also made the gathering of data somewhat problematic. For instance, despite the fact that the Palestinian universities within which I collected a significant portion of my data were relatively close to Jerusalem in terms of distance, getting to and from these institutions often took a significant amount of time due to checkpoints, narrow and poorly maintained roads, and traffic jams. Furthermore, during Israeli public holidays, several of which occurred during my time within the Occupied Territories, checkpoints allowing access from the West Bank into Israel are normally closed (Ari Gross 2018), which thus prevented me from conducting research within the West Bank during such periods. Other logistical and practical challenges included the limited functionality of google maps within the Occupied Territories, and the difficulties involved in contacting those on Palestinian phone

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<sup>30</sup> As Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) contend, to agree to an interview, regardless of how friendly or conversational it may be, is to relinquish a degree of control and risk having one's persona stripped away.

networks via Israeli network providers.<sup>31</sup> However, while for me such challenges were primarily a source of concern to the extent that they affected my ability to conduct research, for those living within the region they epitomise the everyday challenges associated with living under conditions of occupation.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

Having personally transcribed the data, I set about identifying key findings from the research using thematic analysis. As Braun and Clarke (2018) state, thematic analysis is a method used to identify and organise themes within a data set, enabling the researcher to recognise and interpret shared meanings and experiences. In order to ensure that the themes which emerged derived primarily from the content of the data, an inductive approach to coding and analysis was adopted (Braun and Clarke 2018). Although a number of the themes which emerged had previously been identified within literature, the majority derived from the content of the data, and, hence, a significant number of the key findings had not been anticipated prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

While the transcription process proved invaluable in enabling the identification of a number of potential themes, data analysis software was also used in order to help ensure that the subsequent analysis was conducted with sufficient clarity and rigour. Specifically, Nvivo was utilised to categorise the data according to key themes or nodes, and from there a number of sub-nodes were subsequently developed. In relation to Northern Ireland, 5 key nodes were developed, each of which contained between 1 and 4 sub nodes, while 7 key nodes containing between 1 and 4 sub nodes were developed in order to categorise the data which emerged from the Occupied Territories. Hence while the data which emerged from the respective conflict sites was analysed individually, there was a degree of crossover in terms of the classification of key nodes.

The identification of key themes using Nvivo took a number of weeks to complete. Despite this, I felt that it significantly aided the subsequent analysis. I found the software particularly helpful whilst attempting to identify key quotes, i.e. quotes which were subsequently used in order to support key findings. Such quotes are

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<sup>31</sup> While this may not be the case for all providers/networks, I purchased a SIM card from a Palestinian network provider (in addition to my SIM card from an Israeli network provider) in order to enable me to call those on Palestinian networks.

primarily included verbatim, but on a number of occasions the responses of participants have been paraphrased. The use of this software therefore helped to ensure that their words were more frequently and effectively utilised within the research. However, despite its many capabilities, it must be noted that such software cannot overcome the bias of the researcher (Swaine 2011), and hence the interpretation of the data remains shaped to a significant extent by my own identity and positionality within the research (Creswell 2009).

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the methodology which was deemed necessary in order to achieve the objectives of the research. It has located the research within the field of men and masculinities, and has highlighted the gaps within literature which this study seeks to at least partially fill. It has provided justification for the inclusion of two seemingly quite disparate sites of conflict, and has underlined the potential of these sites to illustrate a range of conflict-related experiences and identities. In addition, it has provided a rationale for the recruitment of research participants within the respective conflict sites, and has described the process by which data was collected and analysed. The ethical challenges which arose during the course of the research have also been highlighted and discussed.

Moreover, the chapter has explored the positionality of the researcher and its perceived impact upon both the collection and interpretation of data. In particular, it has highlighted the value of paying close attention to one's gendered positionality and, indeed, gendered vulnerability, within conflict-affected contexts. The methodology utilised herein thus suggests that considering one's gendered vulnerability, alongside that of one's research participants, may significantly add to the depth of gendered analyses within such settings.

In the chapter which follows I examine the conflicts within Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories from both a historical and gendered perspective, and explore the ways in which key events have shaped these societies and their gendered dynamics.

## **Chapter 4: Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine: A Gendered Historical Perspective**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the historical roots of the conflicts within both Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine. It examines the dynamics which led to the outbreak of the conflicts, and the key historical events which occurred during periods of political violence. It describes the various attempts which have been made to end the conflicts, and assesses the relative success of such efforts. Given the prominent role which boxing played in the lives of the participants from Northern Ireland, the chapter also provides a brief overview of the way in which the sport developed within this region. Finally, the chapter also examines the histories of the regions through a gendered lens, thereby aiding our understanding of the gender dynamics present within both societies by locating them within a wider historical context.

### **4.2 The Northern Irish Conflict**

#### **4.2.1 Plantation and Union with Britain**

Between 1969 and 1998, the conflict in Northern Ireland, often referred to as the Troubles, claimed the lives of almost 3,500 and injured thousands more (Sutton 2001; Hamber and Gallagher 2014).<sup>32</sup> While its causes and workings are complex and many explanations have been offered, it can broadly be defined as a conflict between the Protestant/unionist/loyalist community which aims to maintain the links with the rest of the United Kingdom (UK), and the Catholic/nationalist/republican community which seeks unification with the Republic of Ireland (Brown and Ni Aoláin 2015). Although it has been described as a low-intensity conflict, the relative impact on the populace of this small geographical area has been marked (Mac Ginty et al. 2007). Moreover, while political violence has abated, the legacy of conflict continues to present significant peacebuilding challenges (Wilson 2016), and Northern Ireland remains a deeply divided society (Brown and Ni Aoláin 2015).

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<sup>32</sup> Estimates of the number of those injured as a result of the conflict range from 8,333 to 100,000 (Hamber and Gallagher 2014), from a populace of approximately 1.6 million (Mac Ginty et al. 2007).

In order to locate the conflict within a gendered historical perspective, it is necessary to examine the region's colonial history. This takes us back to the back to the sixteenth century, when King Henry VIII declared that England and Ireland should be (forcibly) united under the Crown (Mulholland 2002). Aided and abetted by the Crown and attracted by exploitative opportunities, a large number of Scottish Protestants (or planters) subsequently undertook the Plantation of Ulster at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This resulted in significant displacement of the native Irish population (Tonge 2002), and by 1652 three-quarters of all Irish land was in the hands of Protestant settlers (Quinn 1993).

It is argued that the settlers saw themselves as a frontier community surrounded by violent and wily enemies and backed only half-heartedly by their allies (McKittrick and McVea 2012). They were, therefore, distrustful of both the native Catholic population and, indeed, of metropolitan Britain (McGarry and O'Leary 1995). Moreover, the plantation had introduced devoutly Protestant people to counter-reformation territory, and hence the settlers regarded themselves as chosen people with a biblical covenant to God and an attachment to the Promised Land of Ulster (McGarry and O'Leary 1995). Despite their insecurities, however, Protestants became the social, economic and political elite of the region (Buckland 1981).

In the centuries that followed, Ireland very much remained under the Crown's rule. In 1801, an Act of Union abolished the Irish parliament and government and transferred its responsibilities to Westminster (Darby 1995). Under this arrangement, Quinn (1993) argues that two Irelands gradually emerged. Ulster, which was prosperous and mainly Protestant, was enhanced by the link to Britain, while the rest of the island fared less well and endured the worst of the Irish Potato Famine (1845-51). As a result, bitterness in relation to Britain's apparent indifference to Irish suffering meant that demands for Irish self-government became more insistent in the decades that followed (Quinn 1993).

#### **4.2.2 Demands for Home Rule**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, demands for Irish self-government or Home Rule began to gain some traction. In the late 1870s, a Home Rule party emerged under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell, which demanded a parliament in Dublin that would nevertheless remain subordinate to Westminster

(Quinn 1993). In 1886, British Prime Minister William Gladstone introduced the First Home Rule Bill, but it was defeated in the House of Commons. He introduced a second bill in 1893 only for it to be defeated in the House of Lords (Mulholland 2002). A Third Home Rule Bill was introduced in 1912 and with the veto power of the House of Lords now removed, it seemed that it was now only a matter of time before the bill would become law (Quinn 1993). However, history intervened and the outbreak of the First World War prevented its enactment (Tonge 2002).

The descendants of Protestant settlers were strongly opposed to Home Rule, viewing it as a threat to the union with Britain and as a prelude to Irish independence and the end of Protestant and British domination of Ireland (McKittrick and McVea 2012). Moreover, for the Protestant unionists of Ulster, Home Rule meant Rome Rule and the erosion of their way of life under an overwhelmingly Catholic parliament in Dublin (Quinn 1993). Ulster had also made huge economic advances under British rule and unionists feared that this would be jeopardised if the union was severed (Tonge 2002). Such was the depth of feeling towards Home Rule that, in September 1912, 250,000 unionists signed the Solemn League and Covenant (Mulholland 2002), promising to do all in their power to prevent its imposition. By the outbreak of the First World War, therefore, it was clear that Home Rule was unlikely to encompass all of Ireland given the hostility it faced within Ulster (Tonge 2002).

By the end of the First World War in 1918, however, nationalist desire for Home Rule had been replaced by a desire for an independent Irish republic (McKittrick and McVea 2012). Two years previously, an armed republican rebellion, known as the Easter Rising, had devastated the centre of Dublin and led to the execution of sixteen of its leaders, adding to the list of Irish martyrs who had lost their lives as a result of British oppression (Mulholland 2002). From a gendered perspective, it seems that the rebellion was a response to fears of Irish feminisation under British rule, its leader Padraig Pearce arguing that a nation which regarded bloodshed as the “final horror” had lost its “manhood” (Ashe 2012: 238). With republican sympathy rising, a group known as the Irish Republic Army (IRA) fought a brutal guerrilla war against British forces in Ireland from 1919-1921. The war ended with the negotiation of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, which created a twenty-six county Irish Free State with dominion status within the British Empire (Tonge 2002).

### **4.2.3 The Creation of Northern Ireland**

During this period, the 1920 Government of Ireland Act also created the new state of Northern Ireland from the island's six most north-easterly counties (McKittrick and McVea 2012). As Darby (1995) notes, this was in effect the largest area which could be securely held by a majority in favour of continued union with Britain, Protestants accounting for two-thirds of all those living within the borders of this new entity (Gillespie 2010). In addition to its own parliament, Northern Ireland would continue to send representatives to the British parliament at Westminster (McKittrick and McVea 2012), with London retaining ultimate authority (Darby 1995).

The new Belfast parliament was based on the Westminster model which worked on the principle that shifting electoral fortunes would bring periodic changes of government. In Northern Ireland, however, party allegiance was primarily determined by religious denomination which enabled the overwhelmingly Protestant Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) to establish a monopoly on government (Fraser 2000). This thus enabled the party to establish "a system of domination" over the Catholic and nationalist minority from the state's inception in 1920 until its collapse in 1972 (McGarry and O'Leary 1995: 362).

Hence, for northern nationalists, the creation of Northern Ireland was seen as a "catastrophe" (Mulholland 2002: 28), a phrase which is also referenced below with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Largely abandoned by their nationalist counterparts in the south, they found themselves to be a permanent minority within a state whose Protestant and unionist character held no attraction for them (Quinn 1993). While initially reluctant to legitimise the state, nationalists soon found themselves to be excluded from it both politically and economically (Ni Aoláin 2000). It thus became, in the words of Former First Minister David Trimble "a cold house for Catholics" (cited in McKittrick and McVea 2012: 6-7).

The first-past-the-post electoral system for example, introduced in 1925, meant that nationalists could not hope for more than ten to twelve of the fifty-two seats available within the Northern Irish parliament (Edwards and McGrattan 2010). Furthermore, local government structures were designed to ensure that unionist representatives were in the majority even in areas where nationalists were demographically dominant (Ni Aoláin 2000). Hence the city of Derry, for example,

despite its clear nationalist majority, was under unionist control until 1968 (Edwards and McGrattan 2010).

In addition to the discrimination to be found within the electoral system, there is consensus that it could also be found within a number of other spheres, most significantly in relation to the allocation of public housing and the labour market (Breen 2000). Unionist favouritism with regard to public housing, for instance, was said to be rife in areas such as Belfast, Derry, Dungannon, Armagh and Fermanagh (Quinn 1993; Tonge 2002), while the workforce of the civil service and many large firms within the private sector were also predominantly Protestant (McKittrick and McVea 2012). Furthermore, within the judicial system almost all of the judges and magistrates were Protestant, many having close ties to the governing UUP. Throughout its history the state's police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), also remained more than ninety per cent Protestant (McKittrick and McVea 2012), while at a cultural level the suppression of Irish national identity was commonplace (Tonge 2002).

#### **4.2.4 The Civil Rights Movement and the Onset of the Troubles**

After more than four decades of unionist domination, the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland began to raise their voices and demand reform. In 1967, a body known as the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was established (Gillespie 2010). The organisation, which was inspired by the civil rights movement in the United States and had broad Catholic support, demanded equal voting rights and the end of boundary manipulation, equality in housing allocation, statutory guarantees against discrimination, the abolition of the Special Powers Act, and the disbandment of the reserve police known as the B-Specials (Mulholland 2002; Quinn 1993). Despite the modesty of the demands, unionists were divided between those willing to reform and those resistant to change (Tonge 2002). Moreover, many unionists saw the civil rights movement as a front for an armed campaign by republicans seeking the reunification of Ireland (Muldoon 2004), rather than as a campaign to ensure that all those in Northern Ireland enjoyed their full rights as British citizens (Mulholland 2002).

Although a moderate organisation, the NICRA soon extended its scope of activity to include civil disobedience (Tonge 2002), and, by 1968, marches, sit-ins, protests and

court appearances had become almost daily occurrences (McKittrick and McVea 2012). The unionist government struggled to find a response and excessive force was used by police against protestors (Mac Ginty et al. 2007; McKittrick and McVea 2012). As demonstrations continued and loyalist counter-demonstrations emerged, many feared that public order was on the verge of completely breaking down (Mulholland 2002).

By the summer of 1969 those fears were being realised. Ongoing rioting and sectarian violence had left the RUC demoralised and unable to contain sectarian strife. This led the British government to conclude that it was necessary to send in the British Army to restore order (Ni Aoláin 2000). While initially welcomed by nationalists as a peace-keeping force (Sluka 1989), they soon provided incentive for the renewal of the republican movement and by 1972 the newly formed Provisional Irish Republican Army's (PIRA) campaign against the army was developing strongly (Darby 1995). Loyalist paramilitaries also began to emerge within working-class areas during this period, the most significant of which was the Ulster Defence Association (UDA). As such groups gained strength, Northern Ireland became increasingly ungovernable (Tonge 2002), and assassinations, bombings, riots and security checkpoints became part and parcel of everyday life (Muldoon 2004).

In examining this period from a gender perspective, Ashe (2012: 238) notes that the "hard man" always had a place within Irish republican representations of masculinity. Indeed, the first statement ever released by the PIRA in the 1960s vowed to prove that those within the organisation represented "the essence of Irish manhood" (Ashe 2012: 238). The republican struggle therefore was not only a call to arms, but a call to manhood. Moreover, for Ashe (2012), notions around masculinity and defence of the nation also informed unionist and loyalist decisions to take up arms during the period. As McKeown and Sharoni (2002) contend, the forms of masculinity found within loyalist groups had much in common with those found within the state security forces, with an emphasis on preserving the status quo being a key aspect of identity across such groups. By contrast, they hold that the masculinities found within republican groups were less rigid, as those involved in such groups were striving for social and political change rather than the preservation of the established order.

It is also noteworthy that the conflict in Northern Ireland coincided with the decline of the region's industrial base (Harland and McCready 2015). This had the effect of limiting opportunities for male employment within traditional industries, and in turn reducing the ways in which men from working-class communities could define their worth and status (Magee 2013). With the onset of the conflict, however, it is argued that some working-class men found status and belonging within their communities by acting as its (militarised) defenders and protectors (Harland and McCready 2015). Hence, in the absence of meaningful educational or employment opportunities, violence became a means for men in such communities to express their manhood (Magee 2013), and they thus became those primarily responsible for the perpetration of political violence during the period (Coulter 1999).

As violence engulfed the region, state responses often proved counterproductive. In August 1971, for example, internment without trial was introduced. Within six months, 2,357 people had been arrested, the majority of whom were released after interrogation. Those arrested, however, were overwhelmingly from the nationalist community (Pickering 2002). The measure resulted in a massive upsurge in violence (Fraser 2000), and reinforced nationalist alienation (Quinn 1993). Moreover, nationalist alienation was further compounded by the events of Bloody Sunday when thirteen unarmed nationalists were shot dead by the British Army in the streets of Derry in January 1972 (Tonge 2002). As Mulholland (2002) notes, Bloody Sunday led to a near total collapse of nationalist opposition to political violence, and is remembered as one of the key events of the Northern Irish conflict (McKittrick and McVea 2012).

1972 proved to be the most violent year of the conflict, with 497 losing their lives as paramilitaries on both sides intensified their campaigns (Edwards and McGrattan 2010). It was also the year during which the Stormont (Northern Irish) Parliament was suspended and direct rule from Westminster was introduced (Dixon 2008). From around this time onwards Britain came to the view that power-sharing between unionists and nationalists, as well as providing a limited role for the Irish government, was the best way of finding resolution in Northern Ireland (Mulholland 2002). After talks with the local political parties, legislation was drafted for a new consultative Assembly which would be elected by proportional representation and which would replace the Stormont Parliament (Edwards and McGrattan 2010).

The new power-sharing executive was formally established on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1974, with unionist leader Brian Faulkner as Chief Executive and his nationalist counterpart, Gerry Fitt, as his deputy (Quinn 1993). Right from the start, however, the new executive was beleaguered, and faced opposition both from the PIRA and a majority of the Protestant populace (McKittrick and McVea 2012). Fundamentally, it seemed that there was lack of consent for power-sharing both within and without the Assembly (Tonge 2002). It collapsed in May of that year when a group called the Ulster Workers Council organised a general strike which soon threatened both the Stormont executive and rule of law, forcing unionist members of the executive to resign (Quinn 1993).

As suggested above, throughout the period men's participation in the conflict was viewed as normative (Ashe and Harland 2014), and images on gable walls of men in balaclavas brandishing guns became the norm within many working-class areas of Northern Ireland (Harland and McCready 2015). For Ashe and Harland (2014), such militarism reinforced traditional forms of masculinity and served to push aside historically marginalized identities including those of gender, class and sexuality. This in turn preserved men's power in both public and private spaces; marginalising feminism both culturally and politically (Ashe and Harland 2014), and supporting men's dominance as both decision-makers and political actors (Ashe 2009).

McDowell (2008: 338-339) argues that within this "armed patriarchy" women for the most part were ascribed domestic roles, and, as noted in Chapter 2, were expected to be "keepers of the home flame." That said, however, they also played diverse roles beyond those of wives and mothers and were, for example, involved in organising and participating in protests and engaging in confrontations with soldiers (Sharoni 2001). Women were also at the forefront of peace-making initiatives during the period (Ashe 2009), and in 1976 two Northern Irish women, Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams, won the Nobel Peace Prize for leading public demonstrations which called for an end to the violence (BBC News 2016).

Moreover, despite their involvement in violence being viewed as non-normative (Ashe and Harland 2014), a significant number of women became members of paramilitary organisations. They are said to have accounted for twenty per cent of all republican prisoners and five per cent of loyalist prisoners (Ashe 2009). Alison

(2004) points out that on both sides it was primarily the responsibility of women to transport, clean and store weapons and explosive materials, as it was much less likely that they would be stopped and searched by the security forces. Some of those who joined the PIRA, however, were also given military training, and it seems that women active within republican organisations were more likely to be directly involved in the perpetration of political violence than their loyalist counterparts (Alison 2004).

For Alison (2004), however, that loyalist women were much less involved in military roles than their republican counterparts is no mere coincidence. She contends that anti-state nationalisms striving for liberation often provide more space both ideologically and practically for women's participation than do state or pro-state nationalisms. Hence, as suggested above, it seems that the more flexible interpretation of masculinity found within republican groups committed to social change meant that republican men were generally more comfortable having women within their ranks than their loyalist counterparts (McKeown and Sharoni 2002; Alison 2004).<sup>33</sup> Despite their involvement, McDowell (2008) notes that women tended not to have the same influence as men within paramilitary organisations, and some have also felt marginalised politically in the post-agreement period (Alison 2004).

#### **4.2.5 Towards Peace**

By the mid-1980s it was clear that a military stalemate had emerged. A PIRA defeat appeared unlikely, whilst a forced British withdrawal was not forthcoming (Tonge 2002). In an attempt to forge progress, the British and Irish governments signed an international treaty, known as the Anglo-Irish Agreement, in November 1985 (Fraser 2000). The agreement represented a new form of partnership between London and Dublin (McKittrick and McVea 2012), and for the first time gave Dublin a say on how the North was run (Edwards and McGrattan 2010). It therefore had very significant implications for policy on Northern Ireland (Tonge 2002). While there was significant unionist opposition to the agreement (Edwards and McGrattan 2010), it nevertheless marked the beginning of an institutionalised relationship

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<sup>33</sup>Alison (2004) asserts that while there was a need for republican groups such as the (P)IRA to appear to be representative of a mass social movement, loyalist groups did not claim to represent a revolutionary movement and, hence, did not have the same ideological or strategic need for women's involvement.

between the two governments that would underpin the subsequent peace process (Mac Ginty et al. 2007).

By the 1980s it was also apparent that the republican leadership realised the limitation of armed struggle. As early as 1982 Sinn Fein's (the PIRA's political wing) President Gerry Adams began drawing up an alternative to armed violence (Edwards and McGrattan 2010). In the years that followed he also began a dialogue with John Hume, the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the main (and constitutionally based) nationalist party in Northern Ireland. This dialogue, which became known as the Hume-Adams talks, began in January 1988 and continued until the autumn of that year. While the talks proved inconclusive, they laid the foundation for a positive relationship between the two men and their respective political parties (Fraser 2000).

By the mid-1990s an official peace process had developed. In December 1993 the British and Irish governments produced a joint declaration, known as the Downing Street Declaration, which outlined their approach to ending the conflict (Tonge 2002). The declaration reaffirmed that the British government had no strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland (Fraser 2000), and that it was for the people of both parts of the island to bring about a united Ireland if that was their wish (McKittrick and McVea 2012).

The document also made assurances that political parties committed to peaceful methods could play a full part in democratic politics (Fraser 2000). Such developments enabled the PIRA to announce a complete cessation of hostilities in August 1994 (Mac Ginty et al. 2007). Loyalist paramilitaries, represented by the Combined Loyalist Command, subsequently followed suit and announced the end of their campaigns in October 1994. The path for substantive political progress thus seemed to be clear (Fraser 2000).

However, the bombing of London's Canary Wharf on 9th February 1996, which killed two and caused widespread damage, announced the end of the PIRA ceasefire and jeopardised political progress (Fraser 2000). Despite this, the peace process received something of a boost when the leader of the Labour Party, Tony Blair, was elected British Prime Minister in May 1997 (Edward and McGrattan 2010). Shortly afterwards, the PIRA ceasefire was restored and negotiations began between the

main political parties (Dixon 2008). After significant personal involvement from Blair and his Irish counterpart, Bertie Ahern, a deal was finally brokered by U.S Senator George Mitchell on 10th April 1998 (Fraser 2000). The agreement, commonly known as the Good Friday or Belfast Agreement, was subsequently endorsed by voters on both sides of the Irish Border (Tonge 2002).

The agreement provided for a 108-seat power-sharing Assembly, elected by proportional representation and headed by an executive elected in relation to party strength (Edwards and McGrattan 2010). A system of safeguards was included within Assembly rules to ensure that key decisions were made with cross-community support (McKittrick and McVea 2012). A North-South Ministerial Council and a British-Irish Council was also established (Mac Ginty et al. 2007). Furthermore, paramilitary prisoners were to be released with two years and a commission was to be formed to propose police reform. There were also commitments to strengthening existing measures aimed at ensuring fair employment and ending discrimination, while the status of the Irish language was also to be enhanced (Mulholland 2002).

#### **4.2.6 The Post-Agreement Period**

Despite the relative success of the agreement in significantly reducing levels of political violence, a plethora of peacebuilding challenges remain. As noted within Chapter 3, sharp social and political separation continues to persist, and it has been argued that a form of negative peace has taken root (Morrow et al. 2016). Territorial segregation remains common, and more than ninety per cent of social housing remains segregated according to cultural tradition (Morris 2016).<sup>34</sup> In addition, various forms of physical barriers or peace walls continue to separate many unionist and nationalist communities, and indeed there are now more peace walls in Northern Ireland than there were before the signing of the 1998 agreement (Capener 2017).<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, community segregation within the education system continues to be the norm, with approximately only seven per cent of pupils attending integrated schools during the 2017-18 academic year (Gray et al. 2018).

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<sup>34</sup> Within Belfast, ninety-four per cent of social housing remains segregated according to community background (Morris 2016).

<sup>35</sup> The most recent figures from the Belfast Interface Project showed one hundred and sixteen peace walls across Northern Ireland, ninety seven of which were located in Belfast. The target set in 2012 by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) of removing all barriers by 2023 appears highly unlikely to be met (Gray et al. 2018).

Moreover, paramilitary activity and violence endures,<sup>36</sup> and fear and distrust linger particularly within communities which have been disproportionately affected by conflict violence (Harland 2011). Social exclusion and relative deprivation also continue to present major challenges in relation to dealing with the legacy of conflict (Morrow et al. 2016). Furthermore, the legacy of conflict and continued social deprivation appear to have taken their toll on the mental health of the populace, which is reflected in the region's high rates of depression and mental illness (Gray et al. 2018). Northern Ireland's suicide rates are also the highest in the UK (Black and McKay 2019), with young men in particular taking their lives in relatively large numbers (NISRA 2017).

At the political level, Northern Ireland's institutions continue to be marked not only by misogynous masculinity and the exclusion of women, but also by functional weakness (Brown and Ni Aoláin 2015). Critics argue that the agreement has reinforced continued allegiance to single identities, legitimising Catholic nationalism and Protestant unionism via the power-sharing arrangements (Mac Ginty et al. 2007), whilst entrenching male privilege in the process (Brown and Ni Aoláin 2015). Certainly, nationalist and unionist parties continue to dominate the political landscape, and distrust between these factions persists (Landow and Aly Sergie 2018). Direct rule from Westminster has been re-imposed on a number of occasions (Landow and Aly Sergie 2018), and at the time of writing the devolved institutions had only recently been restored following a three-year absence. Their future, however, remain relatively uncertain, and consensus politics in Northern Ireland continues to be a relatively distant prospect (Tonge 2002).

#### **4.2.7 The Development and Role of Boxing within Northern Ireland**

Boxing has its roots in maritime and commercial cities such as London, Bristol, and Dublin, and has existed in Belfast in one form or another for at least two hundred years (Sugden 1996). Prior to partition, boxing in Ireland was organised by church clubs and boxing organisations, as well as by the Royal Irish Constabulary and the armed forces (Cronin 1997). Post-partition and until the onset of the conflict, the RUC played a prominent role, while the Catholic Church also played (and, indeed,

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<sup>36</sup> In the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019, for example, there were seventeen recorded casualties of paramilitary-style shootings, sixty casualties of paramilitary assaults, and fifteen bombing incidents (PSNI 2019).

continues to play) a significant role in the growth and development of the sport within Northern Ireland (Sugden 1996).

Since partition, the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) has been the only internationally recognised body within Irish Boxing. Despite Northern Ireland being part of the United Kingdom, the British Amateur Boxing Association (BABA) has no control over the regulation of the sport in the region. Moreover, despite its association with one particular national identity, the IABA has largely succeeded in gaining acceptance within both communities (Cronin 1997), as is discussed below and within subsequent chapters (particularly Chapter 6).

That boxing facilitated contact between those on both sides of the community/religious divide, even in the midst of conflict, has been articulated again and again by those associated with the sport. As scholars such as Cronin (1997) and Sugden (1996) have attested, the boxing community felt that it succeeded in rising above sectarian animosities and remaining apart from the forces which promoted cross-community conflict. In the words of former world featherweight world champion Barry McGuigan, boxing thus managed to “cut through the carnage” and to “unify people” (Diris 2014).

While it may appear perplexing that a sport rooted within working-class communities suffering disproportionately from the effects of conflict and deprivation may foster such tolerance and unity, Cronin (1997) suggests some clues may be found in the nature of the sport itself. Firstly, boxing in Northern has not historically been linked with one tradition or the other. Secondly, boxing is a solitary sport that does not give rise to team or group identity in a way that other sports do. Thirdly, as boxers represent themselves individually, Cronin (1997) argues that it has perhaps been easier for them to remove themselves from the cultural and potentially sectarian identities of their neighbourhoods. Finally, as is discussed within Chapter 6, it seems that the shared masculine and chivalric values inherent within the sport served also served to assist the temporary transcendence of religious/community divisions during the period (also see Sugden 1995).

### **4.3 The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

While conflict in Northern Ireland has thus to a significant extent abated, political violence continues to be very much a feature of life within Israel-Palestine, and the conflict, which has cost thousands of lives, continues to be considered one of the most entrenched in the modern world (Handelman 2011).<sup>37</sup> As noted within Chapter 3, while it has been described as ethno-national in nature (Yiftachel 2002; Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008), the roots of which may be attributed to settler-colonialism (Sharoni 2001; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a), both its nature and the historical facts of the conflict remain contested (Berry and Philo 2006). Hence, while any attempt to author a concise history is likely to be fraught with difficulty, in this section I nevertheless attempt to examine both the roots and gendered dynamics of the conflict with due respect to the plurality of possible interpretations.

#### **4.3.1 The Emergence of Zionism**

In order to understand the events of the conflict which unfolded from the twentieth century onwards, it appears necessary to examine the concept of Zionism. Zionism can be described as the desire among the Jewish diaspora to return to the land of their ancestors (Berry and Philo 2006). However, while traditionally this yearning was viewed as something which could only be decided by God, modern or political Zionism which emerged in the nineteenth century was predominantly secular and activist in outlook (Smith 2010).

The chief architect of modern Zionism was Theodor Herzl, a European Jewish intellectual (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008). Herzl was deeply concerned by the potent anti-Semitism which was sweeping across Europe (Berry and Philo 2006), and in 1896 formalised a response by publishing a pamphlet entitled *The Jewish State* (Harms and Ferry 2005). In this pamphlet Herzl suggested that the Jewish people should form their own state, ideally in Palestine (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008). For Herzl, the creation of a Jewish state would absorb European Jewry and end the anti-Semitism which persisted even within Western Europe (Smith 2010).

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<sup>37</sup> Between 1989 and 2018, 7,929 lives were lost as a result of the conflict within Israel-Palestine (Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2019).

Smith (2010) states that Herzl saw Jewish migration to Palestine as a colonisation project similar to that embarked upon by the European powers of the day, and the Zionist slogan “a land without a people for a people without a land,” reflected this colonialist mentality (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a: 5). As Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe (2008) note, at the time there was a widely held belief among the colonial powers that the wishes of indigenous populations were irrelevant to their political ambitions, and thus Herzl was of the opinion that the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine was something with which the colonial powers could sympathise (Smith 2010).

Prior to Zionist inspired immigration, Jews, Christians and Muslims had co-existed largely peacefully in historic Palestine under Ottoman rule (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008), Jews accounting for four per cent of the population in 1860 (Rubenberg 2003). A Jewish presence in the region was not, therefore, seen as problematic, nor were indigenous Jews initially attracted by the ideology of Zionism as espoused by their Jewish counterparts. Subsequent events, however, and the implementation of Zionist ideology in Palestine in the decades that followed, were to radically alter such dynamics.

While initially Zionism did not hold broad appeal among European Jews, forces such as secular nationalism and anti-Jewish prejudice, particularly within Eastern Europe, did much to strengthen its perceived wisdom (Smith 2010). By the 1870s, European immigrants began constructing exclusively Jewish colonies and by the end of the century such efforts had become systematic and internationally organised (Rubenberg 2003). Between 1897 and 1903, some 30,000 Jews had emigrated, and by 1914 there were approximately 80,000 Jews living in Palestine (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008). By this time, the Zionist desire to purchase land and the openness of their commitment to form a separate Jewish entity in Palestine had aroused Arab fears, and both Christian and Muslim opposition to Zionist emigration had already emerged prior to the outbreak of World War One (Smith 2010).

From a gendered perspective, Shor (2008) argues that, historically, the ideal Jewish man was a gentle, timid and studious Rabbi or Talmudic scholar; morally sound but perhaps somewhat effeminate by modern standards (Griffith no date available). While this form of male identity was no doubt influenced by centuries of social and

spatial exclusion in Europe, it was perhaps a form of identity which was not particularly conducive to state building within a potentially hostile environment. A break with traditional conceptions of masculinity was needed (Katz 1996), and early Zionist writers were, therefore, tasked with the responsibility of promoting forms of masculinity grounded in self-sacrifice in the name of national service (Griffith no date available).

Jewish history was thus re-focused in order to highlight a glorious Jewish past to include masculine figures such as Samson, David, and the rebels of Masada (Shor 2008). The new Jewish man was to be a muscular farmer/soldier, an alternative to his vulnerable and victimised diaspora predecessor. He was to move from a feminine acceptance of oppression to a manly assertion of independence (Katz 1996). For Hawari (2004:38) therefore, Zionism was not only a project aimed at the creation of a new state, but one that was intended to redeem “defeated” Jewish manliness.

#### **4.3.2 The British Mandate in Palestine**

The outbreak of World War One was to significantly shape events in the region and greatly increase the potential for conflict between Jews and Arabs. During the course of the war, the British, who were amongst those fighting the Ottomans and their allies, simultaneously made promises to both Palestinian and Zionist leaders regarding the future of Palestine (Sharoni 2001). In what became known as the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence, the Arabs agreed to assist the British war effort by revolting against the Ottomans while the British promised to facilitate the Arab goal of independence in a territory that specifically included Palestine (Rubenberg 2003). A year later in 1917, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration, which implied the intention of facilitating the establishment of “a national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine (Mahler and Mahler 2010: 6). Perhaps unsurprisingly though, these competing promises fuelled tensions between Zionist settlers and Palestinian Arabs and set the scene for direct confrontations between the emerging Jewish and Palestinian nationalist movements in the years that followed (Sharoni 2001).

While the Balfour Declaration was only a statement of British policy, and spoke only of a “national home” “in”, but not exclusively comprising “of Palestine” (Dowty 2005: 71), it was nevertheless viewed by Zionist leaders as a significant step

towards recognition of a future Jewish state (Smith 2010). After the defeat of the Ottomans during World War One, Britain gained control of Palestine not as a colony but as a Mandate from the newly established League of Nations (Fraser 1995), and the Declaration subsequently became legally relevant when it was incorporated into the British Mandate for Palestine (Dowty 2005).

Jewish immigration also continued at pace during the period, with 90,000 immigrants arriving between 1919 and 1926, fuelled by anti-Semitic violence in both the Ukraine and Poland (Berry and Philo 2006). Indeed, the pace of Jewish immigration prompted Palestinians to establish their own national movement in the belief that they too had a legitimate claim to self-determination (Milton-Edward and Hinchcliffe 2008). Fears around Zionist encroachment also resulted in the periodic outbreak of violence. Relatively minor uprisings occurred in 1920, 1921, and 1929, and culminated in a more significant Arab revolt between 1936 and 1939 (Rubenberg 2003). The revolt began as a labour strike which led to mass civil disobedience and finally armed violence (Rubenberg 2003). In time, however, it was brutally suppressed by the British who sent much of the Palestinian leadership into exile and imposed tight restrictions on the political rights of the Palestinian populace (Yiftachel 2002).

Faced with the Nazi regime in Germany and with anti-Semitism in Poland and Romania, Jews continued to leave Europe in large numbers during the 1930s. Restrictions on immigration into many western states, including the United States, meant that Palestine was the only viable destination for those leaving (Fraser 1995). Moreover, the horrors of the Second World War and the Holocaust, which claimed the lives of 6 million Jews and two-thirds of European Jewry (Smith 2010), brought home to Zionists leaders the urgent need to form a Jewish state (Yiftachel 2002). Immigration to Palestine, therefore, reached new heights in the aftermath of the Second World War (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008), and by 1947 there were 610,000 Jews residing in Palestine, accounting for thirty-two per cent of the population (Yiftachel 2006). Furthermore, in the years that followed, more than 300,000 Jews arrived from the Middle East and North Africa, the intake of which would have profound social and political impacts in the decades that followed (Fraser 1995).

Amid rising Zionist paramilitary violence against their authority, and weakened by the impact of the Second World War, the British were rapidly losing their enthusiasm for maintaining law and order in Palestine (Berry and Philo 2006). The British Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, declared Palestine to be “an economic and political liability” and called upon the newly formed United Nations to resolve its future (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008: 25). On 29<sup>th</sup> November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly approved Resolution 181 which proposed the division of Palestine and the creation of both a Jewish state and a Palestinian State, with Jerusalem under permanent UN Trusteeship (Rubenberg 2003).

#### **4.3.3 The War of Independence/Al-Naqbah**

The new Jewish state was awarded fifty-six per cent of the territory of historic Palestine (Dowty 2005). Zionist leaders felt that the resolution provided international recognition of their right to have a Jewish state within Palestine, and, hence, with some reservations, accepted the plan (Korsten 2011). Palestinians, however, viewed the proposal as fundamentally flawed and unjust, and rejected it (Sharoni 2001). At the time, the Jewish community in Palestine accounted for less than one-third of the populace and owned only less than six per cent of the land (Korsten 2011), and thereby accepting the loss of more than fifty per cent of the territory of historic Palestine may have been interpreted as a significant defeat. In hindsight, however, accepting the partition plan may have strengthened the positions of Palestinians relative to that in which they would find themselves in the decades which followed.

In any case, the partition plan unleashed an unprecedented wave of violence which escalated to full-scale war following the establishment of the state of Israel on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1948 (Sharoni 2001). Shortly after the declaration, army units from Egypt, Jordan and Syria, and backed by forces from Lebanon and Iraq, attempted to reclaim the land that had been lost to the newly formed state (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008). The war, known to the Jews as the War of Independence and to Palestinians as *Al-Naqbah* (the catastrophe), was a watershed moment in the struggle over the territory and in the shaping of national identities. By the end of the war, Jewish forces, who were better trained, organised and equipped, had gained control over seventy-eight per cent of historic Palestine (Yiftachel 2006). The remaining

twenty-two per cent fell under Egyptian and Jordanian jurisdiction, with Egypt gaining control of the Gaza Strip while Jordan gained the West Bank and East Jerusalem (Korsten 2011). Palestine, therefore, ceased to exist, except in the minds of its former inhabitants (Rubenberg 2003).

From a gendered perspective, if the need for a Jewish state and a more combative form of Jewish masculinity was apparent by the early twentieth century, the horrors of the Holocaust only served to strengthen Zionist resolve to achieve these objectives. However, whilst the memory of the Holocaust was granted a central place with the establishment of the newly formed state of Israel, Yosef (2008) notes that it tended to overlook individual stories of survival as they often did not fit with the narrative of tough and brave Jewish masculinity which Zionists were seeking to cultivate. Thus, as Yosef (2008) asserts, it was necessary, to a certain degree at least, to forget the trauma of the Holocaust so as not to undermine the discourse of the self-reliant and muscular new Jewish man who was ready to participate in the creation of a new society.

The human costs of the creation of the new Jewish state were, however, immense. The War of Independence/ Al-Naqbah created three-quarters of a million Palestinian refugees (Pappe 2004), many of whom were packed into squalid refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and the Gaza Strip (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008).<sup>38</sup> 418 Palestinian villages were also either destroyed or depopulated (Sharoni 2001), while approximately 150,000 Palestinians, many of whom had been internally displaced, remained within territory under Israeli control and were subsequently subjected to military rule (1950-1966) (Rubenberg 2003; Dowty 2005). Like the Holocaust for the Jewish people, the Naqbah became etched within collective Palestinian memory and the ultimate symbol of their national victimhood and righteousness (Yiftachel 2006).

During the first years of its existence, the new state continued to demolish Palestinian villages and confiscate Palestinian land (Yiftachel 2006). It also enacted the Law of Return (1950) which, together with the Nationality Law (1952), granted Jewish people around the world the right to Israeli citizenship (Mahler and Mahler

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<sup>38</sup> Jordan was the only Arab state to subsequently grant citizenship to Palestinian refugees (Smith 2010).

2010). In the years which followed, it seemed that Palestinians had little way of claiming the right of return or indeed of articulating their desire for Palestinian statehood (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008). In 1964, however, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was established with the aim of liberating Palestine through military means (Mahler and Mahler 2010). It also sought to provide for the Palestinian refugee community and articulate Palestinian claims to self-determination and independence to the rest of the world (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008). In time, under the leadership of Yasser Arafat it was subsequently recognised to be the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people by both the Arab League (1974) and the state of Israel (1993) (Mahler and Mahler 2010).

#### **4.3.4 The Six Day War and Yom Kippur War**

In 1967, however, the Israeli state's grip on historic Palestine was to further strengthen. On 5th June 1967, Israeli forces launched what appeared to be a pre-emptive aerial attack on an Egyptian airfield, whilst simultaneously launching a ground invasion of Egyptian territory. On the same day, Syrian, Jordanian and Iraqi forces attacked targets within Israel, in honour of their defence pact with Egypt (Berry and Philo 2006). By war's end six days later on 11<sup>th</sup> June, the Jordanian Army had been defeated and its air force destroyed, while the military capabilities of the other Arab powers had been significantly weakened (Milton-Edward and Hinchcliffe 2008).

The Six Day War, as it became known, was an unprecedented Israeli military victory (Smith 2010). Israel had gained control of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), the Syrian Golan Heights, and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula (DeVoor 2012). The balance of power in the region had thus firmly tilted in Israel's favour (Fraser 1995), and it subsequently annexed East Jerusalem and enforced military occupation upon the inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Korsten 2011). Indeed, in violation of international law, the conquered territories remain under occupation (Rubenberg 2003), with only the Sinai having been returned to its former administrators (Smith 2010).

From a gendered perspective, it seems that the aforementioned events have had profound consequences for Palestinian conceptions of masculinity. As Amireh (2003) notes, Palestinian nationalism has been consolidated in defeat and for

generations of Palestinian men, nationalism has been experienced as humiliation. Being forced to flee their homes, losing their ability to provide, or living under military rule undoubtedly served to undermine the masculine identities of many Palestinians (Amireh 2003; Holt 2003; Hawari 2004). For Hochberg (2010), therefore, masculinity and its crisis have been situated at the heart of Palestinian national tragedy.

In the face of such loss, it seems that Palestinian men reacted in different ways, depending on the situation in which they found themselves in. Hawari (2004) for example argues that those who remained within the newly formed state of Israel largely accepted their diminished role within society. Subjected to military rule, Hawari (2004) argues that Palestinian men found themselves relegated from the public sphere, their expressions of masculinity largely confined to their abilities to provide for their families. For Hawari (2004) therefore, masculinity in this context became linked to the patient endurance of pain and physical suffering, and with the avoidance of confrontation with the military authorities.

For those who were expelled from the newly formed state of Israel, however, it seems that the decades that followed were a period during which Palestinian nationalism (and Palestinian masculinity) was attempting to reinvent itself in the aftermath of the Naqbah. Amireh (2003) argues that a belief emerged that only armed struggle could unite humiliated refugees and redeem the masculinities of emasculated Palestinian men. Hence, just as Zionists sought to transform and redeem the victimised Jewish masculinity of the diaspora period, it seems that Palestinians sought to redeem Palestinian masculinity through armed struggle in the wake of the Naqba (see Hochberg 2010).

To achieve this, however, Massad (1995) argues that a new model of anti-colonial masculinity was needed which would adapt European nationalist ideals to local conditions, and define what a non-European nationalist masculinity should look like. As a result, it is argued that the image of the masculine freedom fighter has become the authentic symbol of national struggle, both within the Palestinian community and elsewhere (Hochberg 2010). It must be noted, however, that such an image seems very much at odds with the realities of life for many Palestinian men, a point which will be further discussed within subsequent chapters.

While the Six Day War was undoubtedly a triumph of Israeli military power (Dowty 2005), the sense that this new state had to remain ever vigilant against potential aggression appears to have been reinforced in the years which followed. In 1973, for example, Israel was attacked by both Syria and Egypt on Yom Kippur, or the Jewish Day of Atonement. Vulnerable as a result of the timing of the attack, Egyptian forces initially regained control of much of the Sinai, while Syrian forces regained control of the Golan Heights (Mahler and Mahler 2010). However, despite these substantial gains, the Arab forces were eventually pushed back, and Israel retook the territory it had previously lost (Berry and Philo 2006). Having commenced on October 6<sup>th</sup>, a ceasefire was in place by October 22<sup>nd</sup> (Smith 2010); the conflict having cost the lives of 2,832 Jews and 8,528 Arabs (Berry and Philo 2006).

#### **4.3.5 The Invasion of Lebanon**

Some nine years later Israel again found itself at war. More than a decade earlier, the PLO had been expelled from Jordan and had re-established in Lebanon. From there it fought a guerrilla war against Israel, attacking both military and civilian targets (Berry and Philo 2006). On 6<sup>th</sup> June 1982, however, Israel responded by invading Lebanon, officially in response to Palestinian attacks on its northern border, but also with the clear aim of destroying the PLO and quashing Palestinian hopes of statehood (Yiftachel 2006). By 13<sup>th</sup> June, Israeli forces had surrounded Beirut and for the next two months lay siege to the city, bombarding it with heavy weaponry (Berry and Philo 2006). In September they finally moved into West Beirut and with their Christian-Lebanese allies presided over a massacre of at least 2,000 civilians within the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, much to the shock of international onlookers (Milton-Edward and Hinchcliffe 2008). The PLO was subsequently defeated, its social institution destroyed and its leadership expelled (Rubenberg 2003). With the PLO now in Tunisia, Israeli forces would nevertheless remain in Lebanon for a further eighteen years before finally withdrawing in 2000 (Milton-Edward and Hinchcliffe 2008).

#### **4.3.6 The First Intifada**

The next significant threat to the Israeli state came not from outside but from the Palestinians within the Occupied Territories. By the late 1980s, a new generation had emerged within the territories which knew nothing but occupation and the daily

frustrations and humiliations associated with it (Fraser 1995). Tensions boiled over on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1987, when an Israeli military vehicle crashed into several cars in Gaza, killing four Palestinians. A spontaneous uprising, which was undirected by any higher authority, subsequently erupted and spread from Gaza to the West Bank (Smith 2010). The uprising was characterised by mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, and labour and commercial strikes (Yiftachel 2002).

The *intifada* (“shaking off”), as it became known, mobilised all sections of Palestinian society including women, youth and the elderly (Allen 2008: 454), and generated resistance which far surpassed previous forms of protest within the Occupied Territories (Fraser 1995). Israel, with Yitzhak Rabin as Defence Minister, responded with an iron fist policy of force and beatings (Rubenberg 2003). Tear gas was frequently used against protestors, mass beatings were carried out during patrols, and those arrested were often subjected to significant levels of violence (Smith 2010). The *intifada* again brought the conflict to the attention of the international community, and Israel faced increased pressure to find a peaceful solution (Mahler and Mahler 2010).

The *intifada* proved to be a significant turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was the culmination of growing political awareness among young Palestinians and their determination to reject Israeli rule over their lives (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008). This willingness to challenge the occupation was in part a rejection of the policy of endurance or *sumud*, which characterised the older generation’s response to repression (Smith 2010). By taking matters into their own hands, however, the people of the Occupied Territories were partaking in a new and more active form of *sumud* (Harms and Ferry 2005). Moreover, the *intifada* influenced the Jordanian decision to officially relinquish control of the West Bank in order for it to be included within a future Palestinian state (Mahler and Mahler 2005). In the same year (1988), the PLO launched a revised agenda for building a future Palestinian state within the Occupied Territories whilst also recognising Israel’s right to exist. Indeed, such moves would lay the foundation for the Oslo Agreement which was signed some five years later (Yiftachel 2006).

#### **4.3.7 The Oslo Agreement and its Aftermath**

The Declaration of Principles (or The Oslo Agreement as it is commonly known), which was signed on 13th September 1993 by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, brought the intifada to an end (Korsten 2011). The PLO committed itself to peaceful engagement and assumed responsibility for preventing acts of violence by those associated with the organisation, while the Israelis agreed to support the formation of a “Palestinian Interim Self Governing Authority” in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for a period of five years during which time final status negotiations would take place (Dowty 2005: 142). In the interim period, the West Bank was divided into areas A, B and C (see Figure 3). Area A included major Palestinian cities and both civil and security matters were placed under the control of the Palestinian Authority. In Area B, which was comprised of mostly rural areas around the cities, the Palestinian Authority gained responsibility for civil matters, while security authority was to be shared with Israel. Finally, in area C, which consisted of approximately sixty-two per cent of the territory of the West Bank, Israel retained full control of both civil and security matters (Devoir 2012).



Figure 3: West Bank Areas A, B and C (cited in Zahriyeh 2014)

Hopes for the success of the agreement were high. It was the first time that mutual recognition of the respective national movements had been achieved (Yiftachel 2006). The agreement also provided for a framework for the resolution of some of the most important issues pertaining to the conflict such as the status of Jerusalem, the settlements, refugees, and borders and security (Milton-Edwards and Hinchliffe 2008). Moreover, the majority of both Israelis and Palestinians were in support of the proposed two-state solution (Smith 2010).

From the start, however, the agreement was fraught with difficulties (Smith 2010). The ambiguous nature of its language meant what while the PLO saw it as a step towards statehood, Israel felt that it enabled it to retain the Occupied Territories without having to administer them (Harms and Ferry 2005). The agreement, for instance, did not stipulate final territorial or political ends, and contentious issues were shelved until final status negotiations (Yiftachel 2006). In addition, while the newly established Palestinian Authority may have brought benefits to the elite, it had limited power and failed to deliver an economic or political dividend for the majority of Palestinians (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008). In the years following the signing of the agreement, continuing Palestinian terror attacks within Israel also served to undermine its legitimacy (Filc and Lebel 2005), while the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin by an Israeli religious extremist plunged the process into a period of turmoil from which it never really recovered (Dowty 2005).

Moreover, while some practices of the occupation did end in the post-Oslo period, others were implemented with greater intensity (Rubenberg 2003). The years following the agreement, for example, saw more Jewish settlements, more bypass roads, and more land confiscations. The territorial integrity of the region was thus severely compromised (Bishara 2001), and the more rigorous enforcement of the permit regime, which controls the movement of Palestinians both within and outside the territories (Keshet 2006), meant that many areas governed by the Palestinian Authority became accessible only through Israeli checkpoints (Smith 2010). This had a significant impact upon freedom of movement and weakened economic and social bonds among Palestinians (Bishara 2001). All in all, the average Palestinian saw few benefits, while the continuation of Palestinian terror attacks meant more Israelis were now being killed than before the commencement of negotiations (Dowty 2005).

#### **4.3.8 The Second Intifada**

By the end of the 1990s, therefore, the momentum behind Oslo was faltering, and talks at Camp David between Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Barak in July 2000 ended without agreement (Smith 2010). Palestinian anger at the lack of progress subsequently came to the surface in September 2000 (Rubenberg 2003), when opposition leader Ariel Sharon made a visit to the Temple Mount in the heart

of Jerusalem's Old City.<sup>39</sup> Sharon's visit to the site, which lies at the heart of the imagined Palestinian homeland, was in Sharon's own words designed to show "Israel's undeniable sovereignty over the entire united Jerusalem" (Yiftachel 2006: 76). For Palestinians however, this was viewed as a deliberately proactive act and yet another example of Israeli arrogance (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008).

The next day Palestinian protestors responded by throwing stones at the Israeli security forces and those praying at the Western Wall (Harms and Ferry 2005). The Israeli police and military responded forcefully, using live ammunition and shooting with intent to kill (Smith 2010). The tone was thus set for further confrontations and despite negotiations the cycle of violence spun out of control (Harms and Ferry 2005; Mahler and Mahler 2010), with Palestinians carrying out terror attacks against Israeli citizens and settlers and the Israeli military responding by shelling civilian neighbourhoods in the West Bank and Gaza (Yiftachel 2006; Allen 2008). The violence was enough to topple Ehud Barak's more conciliatory government and brought Ariel Sharon to power in February 2001 (Yiftachel 2002). By July 2004, 2764 Palestinians and 902 Israelis had lost their lives, and the Palestinian economy had contracted by two-third (Yiftachel 2006). The majority of those who died on both sides, in what became known as the second intifada, were civilians (Yiftachel 2002).

While there was no single event that ended the violence, in February 2005 Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced that the violence would come to an end, while Prime Minister Sharon agreed to release 900 Palestinian prisoners and withdraw the Israeli army from cities in the West Bank. The intifada, however, had significantly altered both the political and physical landscape of the region (Korsten 2011). As part of his election campaign Sharon had promised an increased focus on security, and once Prime Minister announced the construction of a separation barrier to prevent Palestinian suicide attacks within Israeli territory (Mahler and Mahler 2005). Construction of the separation wall commenced in June 2002 and loosely followed the border with the Occupied Territories (Harms and Ferry 2005). Nevertheless, its construction resulted in the confiscation of large tracts of Palestinian land (Yiftachel 2006), and in 2004 the International Court of Justice

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<sup>39</sup> The site, known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslim as Haram al-Shariff, is considered a sacred site by both faiths (Baskin 2016).

ruled that the wall was illegal under international law,<sup>40</sup> a non-binding ruling which was subsequently rejected by the Israeli Supreme Court (Yacobi 2007).

#### **4.3.9 Disengagement from Gaza and Prospects for Peace**

In June 2004, as the wall was under construction, Sharon announced that Israel was to unilaterally withdraw military installations and settlers from the Gaza Strip (DeVoor 2012). While this was achieved by August 2005 (Korsten 2011), Israel nevertheless retained control of Gaza's airspace, land and maritime borders, and the movement of goods and people (DeVoor 2012). Gaza thus remained thoroughly locked down along its borders (Mahler and Mahler 2010). The situation in Gaza was further complicated when, in January 2006, the Palestinian Islamist movement, known as Hamas, won parliamentary elections within the Occupied Territories (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008). The election results were condemned by the United States, which had long regarded Hamas as a terrorist organisation,<sup>41</sup> and they moved to block financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority, while Israel withheld tax revenues and blocked all gates to Gaza, resulting in financial and political chaos (Smith 2010; Mahler and Mahler 2010). This was followed in 2007 by full scale battles between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, which saw Hamas gain full control over Gaza while the Palestinian Authority retained control of the West Bank (DeVoor 2012).

Since its withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Israel has continued to militarily intervene in the territory in various ways, often with devastating consequences. In 2008, it launched a full-scale attack, code named Operation Cast Lead. While it lasted just twenty-two days, it cost the lives of over 1300 Palestinians (DeVoor 2012). Some four years later, Israel again attacked Gaza during Operation Pillar of Defence, which lasted from 14<sup>th</sup> to 21st November 2012. According to B'Tselem (2013), this resulted in the deaths of 167 Palestinians, at least eighty-seven of whom were civilians. In 2014, Israel launched another military offensive, code named Operation

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<sup>40</sup> The International Court of Justice ruled that the construction of the wall impeded the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and impeded their liberty of movement as Guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It also found that the impact of the wall on the daily life of those living in the Occupied Territories were contrary to provisions contained within the Hague Regulations of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Moreover, the Court was not convinced that the course chosen for the wall was necessary for Israel to attain its security objectives (International Court of Justice 2003).

<sup>41</sup> Hamas does not recognise the state of Israel (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008).

Protective Edge, which lasted fifty days and resulted in the deaths of 1,462 within Gaza and caused significant damage to property and infrastructure (Amnesty International 2016;<sup>42</sup> UNCTAD 2015). Moreover, in the past two years there have been hundreds of fatalities and thousands of injuries as a result of the Israeli response to those protesting along the Gazan border in what has become known as the Great March of Return (UNOCHA 2019a).<sup>43</sup>

Current prospects for peace thus seem remote. The settlement drive has compromised the territorial integrity of the Occupied Territories and made a just solution more difficult to achieve (Bishara 2001). Gaza's borders remain closed and its economy and infrastructure in dire need of investment, while the Palestinian Authority continues to struggle with corruption, poor organisation, and interference from Israel (Mahler and Mahler 2010). Palestinians within Israel continue to face exclusion and suspicion (Rubenberg 2003), while Israelis continue to live in fear of terror attacks or, indeed, attacks from neighbouring states (Mahler and Mahler 2010). Furthermore, while Palestine has been recognised as a state by the UN (UN 2012), in reality an independent Palestine, or a viable state that could accommodate the aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians, appears to be a long way off.

From a gendered perspective, there is little doubt that years of conflict and occupation have had a profound effect on the identities of those living within both Israel and the Occupied Territories, a point which will be further discussed in the chapters which follow. For Palestinians it seems that the occupation has seriously diminished the practices available for the display and affirmation of masculinity in autonomous actions (Peteet 1994); while high levels of unemployment, the destruction of homes and agricultural land, and fear of military incursion have redefined how masculinity is imagined and articulated (McDonald 2010). It is contended, therefore, that the current state of Palestinian masculinity remains one of coercion and political subjugation (Gokani et al. 2015). By contrast it is argued that Jewish conceptions of masculinity remain centred on the tough and victorious Israeli soldier, and the new Jewish man continues to exert considerable influence within

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<sup>42</sup> Both Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups have been accused of committing war crimes during the hostilities in 2014 (Amnesty International 2016).

<sup>43</sup> 277 fatalities and 28,000 injuries were recorded between 30<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 (UNOCHA 2019a).

Israeli culture (Shor 2008), the consequences of which continue to have a profound effect upon the Palestinian community.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the historical roots of the conflicts within both Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine. It has examined the events which led to the outbreak of the respective conflicts, and has highlighted those which were most significant in ensuring their continuation. It has noted the development of boxing within Northern Ireland, and the role which the sport played in bridging community divisions in the midst of violent conflict. The chapter has also described the attempts which have been made to end conflict and division within the regions, and the current prospects for transformative peace. Moreover, by examining developments within the regions through a gender lens, it has located the gendered dynamics present within both societies in relation to their historical foundations.

In the chapter which follows I critically examine two of the key concepts upon which much of this research has been forged, namely that of the civilian and the (male) body. In particular, the legal and philosophical understandings of these concepts are explored in relation to their applicability to the study of masculinities and conflict.

## **Chapter 5: Civilians, Male Bodies and Conflict**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines two of the key concepts which underpin much of this research, namely, that of the civilian and of the male body. The legal and philosophical underpinnings of these concepts are explored in relation to the construction and affirmation of masculinities during contemporary armed conflict, with a particular emphasis on Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The chapter begins by examining the historical and legal developments which gave rise to the category of people we now think of as civilians. It then discusses the gendered nature of the civilian protection regime, including the extent to which men have often struggled to affirm their status as civilians or benefit from the protections associated with this form of categorisation. It also highlights the developments over the last century or so which have served to undermine the regime's ability to protect civilians from the most egregious effects of armed conflict.

Moreover, the chapter explores the ways in which bodies, and particularly male bodies, have been conceptualised within gendered scholarship. It draws attention to the corporality of civilian suffering, including the ways in which the material nature of male bodies has often been overlooked by those charged with civilian protection. It examines how the experience of bodily vulnerability can have a significant impact upon male identity, with particular reference to the checkpoint regime within the Occupied Territories. It thus links gendered civilian protection, bodily vulnerability, and male identity in a manner which facilitates further theorisation on the performance of civilian masculinities within conflicted societies.

### **5.2 The Principle of Distinction and the Theory of Just War**

Judicially, distinguishing between the civilian and the combatant is formally known as the principle of distinction (Kinsella 2011).<sup>44</sup> The principle attempts to differentiate between armed forces conducting hostilities, and those presumed not to be taking part in hostilities, i.e. civilians (Melzer 2009). The principle is rooted

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<sup>44</sup> See Articles 48, 51(2) and 52(2) of Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflict (Protocol I), of June 1977.

within western traditions of war which hold that persons clearly not responsible for its prosecution should not be intentionally attacked or killed (Hartigan 2010), and that even in the midst of war mercy and restraint should remain present (Slim 2008). The principle has been borne of both moral and religious concerns, although it has also been informed by practical considerations related to principles of military necessity and proportionality (Slim 2008; Blum 2010).<sup>45</sup>

The principle of distinction and the civilian ethic more broadly have been profoundly shaped by the Christian tradition of just war (Slim 2008). This tradition dominated the Christian philosophy of war for almost a thousand years and its influence has been felt well beyond the confines of Christian societies (Hartigan 2010). St Augustine has often been regarded as the father of this tradition (Christopher 1994). Writing as Bishop of Hippo during the fourth and early fifth century, Augustine argued that war could only be waged if there was a just cause and an objective infringement upon the legal order. It was thus necessary that it be carried out under the auspices of the recognised legal authority, and, indeed, that its primary motivation be the attainment of peace (Hartigan 2010). Moreover, Augustine argued that mercy should be shown to those captured or no longer able to fight, and that wanton violence and attacks against women and children should be prohibited (Hartigan 2010); women and children presumably symbolising Augustine's concern for the protection of those deemed to be both innocent and vulnerable.

As Clark (1988) notes, however, within Augustine's writings the permissive element is much more dominant than the restrictive element. It seems that Augustine was of the view that those waging war had a divine right to punish evildoers (Clark 1988), and hence that war was a just, even loving punishment for the transgressions of the enemy (Blum 2010). As just war was, therefore, a retributive and moral act, it appears that he was of the opinion that few among the enemy population of an unjust

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<sup>45</sup> The principle of military necessity "permits a state engaged in armed conflict to use only that degree and kind of force, not otherwise prohibited by the law of armed conflict, that is required in order to achieve the legitimate purpose of the conflict, namely the complete or partial submission of the enemy at the earliest possible moment with the minimum expenditure of life and resource" (United Kingdom Ministry of Defence 2005: 21-22). The principle of proportionality denotes the distinction between the intentional killing of civilians, which is always forbidden, and the recognition that war cannot be fought without inadvertently affecting the lives of civilians (Blum 2010).

state could be truly innocent, thus rendering their protection of limited importance (Hartigan 2010; Blum 2010; Clark 1988). Furthermore, as a believer in the “temporal insignificance” of the human condition (Slim 2008: 29), Slim (2008) argues that Augustine was more concerned about the soul’s eternal fate than the harm which might befall the human body during wartime.

While Augustine’s writing on just war may be interpreted as at least a partial attempt to ensure that mercy and restraint had a place within war, it also appears that there was a pragmatic, political rationale behind the concept’s ascendance. As von Elbe (1939) notes, while the institution of war was challenged by the early church, after the conversion of Constantine and the cessation of Christian persecution the pacifist spirit of the church largely disappeared, and war was recognised as a necessity under certain conditions. It was thus in this context that the concept furnished the rules for the prosecution of war and provided justification for Christians to participate in war without being judged guilty of sin (von Elbe 1939; Kunz 1951).

Augustine’s doctrine of just war was notably expanded upon some eight centuries later by St Thomas Aquinas. In keeping with the spirit of Augustine’s works, Aquinas also held that for war to be just it had to be declared by a proper authority, for a just cause, and for a morally good aim (Christopher 1994). Like Augustine, Aquinas regarded just war as a punishment for wickedness (McKeogh 2002), and thus was also of the belief that soldiers should be permitted to kill during warfare so long as they did not do so for from a motive of private passion or animosity (Hartigan 2010).

Aquinas also developed the concept of double effect, which has had a profound effect on the theory of just war and international law (Christopher 1994). Double effect permitted a degree of collateral damage so long as the killing of innocents was not intended and was merely a secondary effect of justified military action, and that the good resulting from the principal intent outweighed the negative consequences brought about by the unintended secondary effect (Clark 1988). Despite his contributions to the just war doctrine however, Hartigan (2010) stresses that Aquinas was primarily concerned with how the prosecution of war could co-exist with Christian ideals of brotherly love, and thus never fully got to grips with the intricacies and practical realities of warfare.

For Sloane (2009), therefore, both Aquinas and Augustine were more concerned with the justness of the prosecution of war in theory than with placing practical limits upon its prosecution. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, however, scholars such as Hugo Grotius and Emmerich de Vattel, relying on more secular conceptions of natural law, separated the justness of the cause of war from the justness of the methods involved in prosecuting war (Blum 2010). Such a distinction was to have significant influence upon just war theory and in the modern era just war is primarily discussed in relation to the principles of *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello*; *ius ad bellum* stipulating the conditions under which a war might be undertaken and *ius in bello* specifying how war might be justly waged once it has been embarked upon (Clark 1988).

Interestingly, Sloane (2009) argues that the concept of restraint during hostilities (as it relates to *ius in bello*) chiefly evolved from the largely secular concept of chivalry, which in theory at least had a bearing upon the conduct of Christian knights in the middle ages. Similarly, Sjoberg (2006) is also of the opinion that just war theory can be understood as a morality of male heroism. Indeed, the role played by notions of chivalry and male honour in relation to the protection of civilians will be further discussed below and within subsequent chapters. That said, however, it would seem that both historical and contemporary scholarship on just war theory has largely failed to recognise the salience of gender, the status of women (Sjoberg 2006), or the presence of non-combatant men.

### **5.3 The Development of Civilian Protection within International Law**

While legal principles of restraint in war had begun to emerge in Europe by the end of eighteenth century (McKeogh 2002), it was the Lieber Code of 1863 that proved to be the most detailed and influential precursor to modern conventions on the protection of civilians (Slim 2008). Developed during the American Civil War, the Lieber Code was the first modern codification of the laws of war (Blum 2010). The code wrestled explicitly with the rights, responsibilities and suffering of the enemy population (Slim 2008), and stipulated that in occupied territories the occupying power had a duty to protect the property and person of the inhabitants (Meron 1998). In this respect, therefore, the Lieber Code made a significant contribution to the laws

governing internal armed conflict and, indeed, military occupation, and its humanitarian principles have impacted upon both multilateral treaties and the development of customary law (Meron 1998).

One year later, in 1864, the First Geneva Convention was drafted.<sup>46</sup> While it was primarily concerned with the care of the sick and the wounded on the battlefield (ICRC 2013), the convention clearly distinguished between combatants and non-combatants, and thus further contributed to the development of civilian protection (Slim 2008). This was followed in 1868 by the St Petersburg Declaration, which was negotiated among the leading military powers of the day and sought to fix the technical limits of war with due regard for humanitarian requirements (Blum 2010). Some decades later the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 attempted to address a wide range of issues including the status and rights of non-combatants. These Conventions stated that civilians were not to be taken hostage, their property was to be respected, and they were to be permitted to move freely within occupied areas (Hartigan 2010).

It was not until 1949, however, that humanitarian rules relating specifically to the civilian population emerged (Plattner 1992). The Second World War had had a devastating impact upon civilians and by its end few questioned the need for an instrument that would enhance civilian protection (Chesterman 2001; Plattner 1992). The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949<sup>47</sup> was, therefore, a recognition of the changing nature of warfare (Chesterman 2001), and while previously the laws of war had been geared towards the interest of states, civilians were now regarded as a distinct category under international law (Nabulsi 2001).

Civilian protection was further strengthened (in theory at least) with the drafting of the Additional Protocols to the Fourth Geneva Convention in 1977 (Slim 2008).<sup>48</sup> As the twentieth century progressed, the proliferation of internal armed conflicts and the increased use of guerrilla warfare and modern weaponry meant that civilians were

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<sup>46</sup> Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field. Geneva, 22 August 1864.

<sup>47</sup> Geneva Convention Relative the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.

<sup>48</sup> Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflict (Protocol I), of 8 June 1977; Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflict (Protocol II), of 8 June 1977.

accounting for an ever- greater proportion of casualties. The Additional Protocols therefore aimed to strengthen the rules relating to the conduct of hostilities and the means and methods used in warfare, with Additional Protocol II solely addressing internal armed conflict (Spoerri 2009). The protocols also addressed the increasingly civilianised nature of conflict by stipulating that civilians enjoy protection from direct attack “unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities” (Melzer 2009: 5).<sup>49</sup>

As of November 2018, 196 states had ratified the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, while 174 states had ratified the First Additional Protocol and 168 had ratified the Second Additional Protocol (ICRC [a]; [b]; [c], no dates available). Together with The Hague laws, the UN Convention Against Genocide, and the Statutes of the International Criminal Court, it is argued that extensive formal legal protection now exists for civilians in both inter-state and civil wars (Slim 2008). Civilian immunity, therefore, is now said to form the bedrock of laws regulating armed conflict, to be at the heart of the mandates of numerous international organisations (Carpenter 2006a; Slim 2008). However, although the protection of civilians under international law is extensive, the problem over the last fifty years has largely been one of application (ICRC 2010), as is further discussed below.

#### **5.4 Defining the Civilian**

The civilian is thus essentially a product of international law and international relations (Kinsella 2011), and represents an evolving concept in both legal and cultural terms (De Búrca 2014). It is argued that the term civilian first entered common usage in the nineteenth century and was used to denote a “non-military man or official”, the emphasis being very much on the man (Kinsella 2011: 16). Historically, therefore, it seems the term was used primarily to distinguish between different groups of men, but with the passage of time became much more synonymous with women and children; as has been noted in Chapter 2 and which is also further discussed below.

While the First Geneva Conventions of 1864 distinguished between combatants and non-combatants, it was only after World War One that the term (civilian) was used

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<sup>49</sup> See Paragraph 3 of Article 51, Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflict (Protocol I), of June 1977.

formally during international discussions (Slim 2008). The body of law that emerged after World War Two and the Nuremberg trials further helped to define the term, and, as noted above, with the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 civilians became a distinct category under international law (Nabulsi 2001). It was not until the Additional Protocols of 1977, however, that the civilian was formally defined within this body of law (Kinsella 2011). In fact, international law has not as yet defined the term in positive a manner, and thus the civilian remains defined by what he or she is not (Slim 2008; Rothbart et al. 2012).

#### **5.4.1 Gender and the Civilian**

As has been noted within Chapter 2, while civilian immunity is not a gendered norm per se, it is often associated with women and children more than with adult men (Carpenter 2003). Within both the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols, for example, reproductive capacity and sexual vulnerability are used to distinguish between the combatant and the civilian, characteristics which only women were thought to possess (Kinsella 2011). In addition, within the Pictet commentary on the Fourth Geneva Convention, examples of those who, “by definition,” do not take an active part in hostilities include women and children, the old and the infirm (Pictet 1958: 118). Hence, in more recent times the civilian has primarily been coded feminine, and consequently, it would seem that the law has frequently missed the mark in terms of adequately recognising all those eligible for, and requiring of, civilian protection (Hirsch 2012).

It has thus become the case that equating women and children with vulnerability has become a mainstay of the discourse on civilian protection, with such groups epitomising innocent civilians in a way that adult men do not (Carpenter 2003; Slim 2008).<sup>50</sup> The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) website, for instance, lists women and children, as well as the sick and the old, as those who are “highly vulnerable” to the effects of armed conflict (ICRC 2010). Moreover, Hirsch (2012: 255) notes that the phrase “vulnerable women” is given special consideration in several UN declarations; vulnerability, like innocence, denoting gendered entitlement as well as a lack of agency. By contrast, civilian men it seems have often

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<sup>50</sup>Indeed, strictly speaking it is argued that innocence denotes the inability to threat or cause harm (Slim 2008; Blum 2010), and thus in this sense one can understand why civilian men of battle age have largely been excluded from this form of categorisation.

been “the big forgotten ones, the ones nobody talks about” (Carpenter 2006a: 9), and, as noted within Chapter 1, have been, and continue to be, overlooked within research, the media, and military and humanitarian thinking (Foster 2011; Allsopp 2015; Hutchings 2011).

In more recent times, however, male vulnerability during conflict has been highlighted by scholars such as Adam Jones and Charli Carpenter. Jones (2004), for example, has argued that men are often the primary victims of armed conflict, and thus that they may, in fact, be more in need of civilian protection than other groups. Similarly, Carpenter (2003) has highlighted the gendered dynamics of the mass killing of men and boys within the former Yugoslavia and has contended that, of the civilians present within this context, men were those most likely to lose their lives at the hands of enemy forces. For Carpenter (2003), therefore, the tendency of women and children to be more closely associated with civilian status than their male counterparts had far reaching and tragic consequences for civilian men.

Susan Hirsch has also drawn attention to the ways in which ideologies have influenced perceptions of civilian identity. As Hirsch (2012) states, while purporting to be a universal category designed to apply to everyone equally, identities including those of gender and age often more strongly influence those who are treated as civilians rather than whether or not such persons have acted as combatants. Hence, as a result of the operation of a “gender subnorm” within international law, Hirsch (2012: 255) argues that men face more difficulty than their female counterparts in asserting their civilian status to either enemy forces or international protectors. As a possible way forward, therefore, Hirsch (2012: 263) suggests that adopting an intersectional approach to civilian identity may guard against the “over-influence” of gender ideologies, and may precipitate the development of protection strategies which may aid those with diverse civilian identities.

Yet, despite the influence of the aforementioned scholars, it would appear that the concept of the civilian adult male remains somewhat oxymoronic. Historically, Lindner (2004) argues that in traditional honour societies men of battle age lost their right to live if they were incapable of defending themselves, and thus that the concept of the civilian adult male did not exist within such societies. For Lindner (2004: 55), therefore, the killing of battle age men within such contexts was a sign of

respect for their “dangerous” and, therefore, “worthy” enemies, and in keeping with notions of male honour and chivalry as mentioned above. While such norms may not inform most contemporary, conflict-affected societies to the same extent, it would nevertheless appear to be the case that the concept of honour (and chivalry) continues to influence both the conduction and experience of warfare, as will be further discussed within subsequent chapters.

In a similar vein, Blum (2010: 137) opines that civilian immunity is not based on either moral culpability or threat, but on the ability to partake in a “fair and honourable” fight. Thus, as potential combatants, the continued killing of civilian men of battle age would appear to be in keeping with (gendered) honour codes forged in centuries past (see Jones 2004; Lindner 2004). In addition, it would seem that both international and national legal norms continue to judge such (potentially dangerous) persons as less worthy of protection than those more commonly associated with civilian status (Myrntinen et al. 2017; Carpenter 2006a),<sup>51</sup> and that the killing of women and children continues to represent a worse crime than merely the killing of civilians (Kinsella 2011).

#### **5.4.2 Defining the Combatant**

In order to more fully understand the meaning of the term civilian within international law, however, it is also necessary to examine what is meant by the term combatant. Customary international law, for example states that: “All members of the armed forces of a party to the conflict are combatants, except medical and religious personnel” (ICRC [d] no date available). Perhaps more specifically, within the Third Geneva Convention combatants are defined as:

1. Members of the armed forces of a party to a conflict as well as members of a militia or volunteer corps forming such parts of the armed forces.
2. Members of other militias and members of other volunteer corps, including those of organised resistance movements, belonging to a party to the conflict and operating in or outside their own territory” and
- “3. Members of regular armed forces who profess allegiance to a government or an authority not recognised by the detaining power

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<sup>51</sup> Under the Obama administration for example, it has been claimed that men of battle age killed as a result of drone strikes were presumed to be “terrorists” (Friedersdorf 2012).

(Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of 12 August 1949).

It is important to note, however that (as suggested above) as stated within the Hague Regulations and as set forth in Article 43(2) of Additional Protocol I, that: “armed forces of the belligerent parties may consist of combatants and non-combatants.”<sup>52</sup> In addition the military manuals of both Germany and the United States point state that persons such as judges, government officials,<sup>53</sup> and civil defence personnel<sup>54</sup> are also to be considered non-combatants.

Civilians, whose lives should be spared, are to be distinguished from soldiers or combatants who may be legitimately killed on account of their direct participation in hostilities (McKeogh 2002; Carpenter 2006a). Once in their combat roles, it is argued that soldiers are denied individual identities and instead become “non-persons” whose lives are of only instrumental value, both to the state and to the enemy (McKeogh 2002: 12; Blum 2010). For Blum (2010), then, they are in effect expected to forfeit their own right to life so that the lives of civilians might be spared. As a result of combatant privilege, however, soldiers do enjoy immunity from domestic prosecution for having participated in lawful acts of war, and are also entitled to protection once they have been rendered *hors de combat* as a result of capture of capture, surrender, or injury (Melzer 2009; Blum 2010).<sup>55</sup>

In spite of this, Blum (2010) argues that considerations pertaining to protecting soldiers /combatants from the worst excesses of warfare have largely been overlooked within international humanitarian law, an oversight which would again appear to be gendered in nature given that it is primarily men who directly participate in armed conflict (Cockburn 2001). Blum (2010) states, for instance, that there is no requirement to use restraint when targeting enemy soldiers or combatants, nor is there any duty to warn them prior to an attack, or to capture or injure rather than to kill them. The principle of proportionality is thus considered irrelevant to soldiers and combatants and they remain legitimate targets even when in retreat, off

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<sup>52</sup> See Article 3, Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The Hague, 18 October 1907.

<sup>53</sup> See The Federal Ministry of Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany’s Military Manual (1992), *Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflicts*.

<sup>54</sup> See United States handbook of naval operations, United States Department of the Navy (1995).

<sup>55</sup> See Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

duty or on leave (Blum 2010). Furthermore, as Walzer (2006) notes, no account is taken of their potential unwillingness to fight or the conditions under which they may have been recruited. The legal protection of soldiers and combatants during conflict, therefore, the majority of whom are male, remains weak.

Civilian identity, and the protection which civilians are afforded under international law, thus depends on the construction of a specific category of people, i.e. civilians, in relation to another group of people, i.e. combatants (Slim 2008). As Carpenter (2006: 19) notes, the international legal system which upholds this distinction rests on a number of principles, namely:

1) that a meaningful distinction can be drawn between combatants and civilians;<sup>56</sup> 2) that persons not taking part in hostilities ought not to suffer as a result of them;<sup>57</sup> and 3) that belligerents and third parties have an obligation to ensure such suffering is indeed avoided or minimized.<sup>58</sup>

However, whether as combatants or civilians, it would appear to remain the case that gendered assumptions implicit within international law continue to leave men disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of armed conflict, as is evidenced by the relatively large numbers of male deaths within conflicted societies (Vess et al. 2013; Wright 2014).

### **5.4.3 Civilians and Direct Participation in Hostilities**

Reference has made above to the concept of direct participation in hostilities. According to the First Additional Protocol, civilians must refrain from partaking in hostilities or forfeit their right to immunity (Carpenter 2006a). Civilians can, therefore, lose their right to protection “for such time as they directly participate in hostilities” (Melzer 2009: 65), and, hence, need not be considered by enemy groups attempting to minimise harm to civilians (Schmitt 2010). According to the ICRC *Interpretive Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities under*

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<sup>56</sup> Article 48 of Additional Protocol I states that “the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives.”

<sup>57</sup> Additional Protocol I and Additional Protocol II both prohibit civilians from being “the object of attack”, while Protocol II and III to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons all prohibit the directing of weapons towards civilians.

<sup>58</sup> Article 35 of Additional Protocol I states that “It is prohibited to employ weapons, projectiles and material and methods of warfare of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering.”

*International Humanitarian Law*, the concept of direct participation in hostilities thus must be in relation to specific hostile acts. Moreover, for an act to be hostile it must:

1) be likely to adversely affect the military operations or military capacity of a party to an armed conflict, 2) there must be a direct causal link between the act and the harm likely to result either from that act, or from a coordinated operation of which that act constitutes an integral part, 3) the act must be specifically designed to directly cause the required threshold of harm in support of a party to the conflict and to the detriment of another (Melzer 2009: 16).

Crucially, according to the ICRC's interpretative guidance, civilians lose their right to protection for the duration of each specific act, whereas both members of state armed forces and non-state armed groups lose protection against direct attack for as long as they continue to be members of such groups. Hence, civilians who participate directly in hostilities only on a sporadic or unorganised basis must still be regarded as civilians when not directly engaged in hostilities. Their direct participation suspends their entitlement to protection for the duration of each specific act, but after the conclusion of such acts their civilian status and right to protection is restored (Melzer 2009).<sup>59</sup>

Yet, while in theory at least, civilians who directly participate in hostilities may be afforded more extensive protection from the effects of conflict than members of state forces or non-state armed groups, it is also the case that civilians may be tried and punished for merely participating in hostilities even when they have respected the rules of international law (Dörmann 2003). By contrast, and as noted above, combatants who engage in lawful acts of war are exempt from domestic prosecution as a result of combatant privilege (Blum 2010).

The distinction between members of state forces and non-state armed groups, and civilians merely participating in hostilities on a sporadic basis, is important to note

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<sup>59</sup> As Schmitt (2010) notes however, there remains extensive debates over when direct participation might begin and end, and hence the appropriate duration of the suspension of civilian protection is liable to be often unclear.

given the type of conflict which occurred within both Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine. Like many conflicts which have occurred in recent decades, they have been categorised by the intermingling of civilians and combatants, and also by the presence of members of non-state armed groups who were indistinguishable from members of the civilian population, or from civilians merely participating in hostilities on a sporadic basis. Membership of a non-state armed group has not, however, served to protect those who engaged in political violence from prosecution in either setting, as neither the British nor Israeli governments have recognised the lawfulness of such acts of aggression.

## **5.5 Ambiguous Civilian Identities**

### **5.5.1 The Principal of Distinction and Contemporary Armed Conflict**

While civilians represent a distinct category of people who are afforded a significant level of protection from conflict under international law (Slim 2008), in practice (as suggested above), distinguishing civilians from combatants, or indeed, distinguishing between civilians directly participating in conflict violence from those not directly participating in such violence, is not without its difficulties. In recent decades it seems that such difficulties have increased as a result of the proliferation of internal armed conflicts (Slim 2008). Such conflict have often been fought within urban population centres and have blurred the lines between the battlefield and civilian or private space (Melzer 2009; Fluri 2011), as can be seen, for example, with reference to both Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine.

Moreover, as Melzer (2009) states, in contemporary armed conflicts gangsters and criminals often operate in a grey zone which makes it difficult to distinguish between those participating in hostilities, and those engaged in violent crime unrelated to, but perhaps facilitated by, the conflict context. In addition, the problems associated with applying the principle of distinction have been further complicated by the increased intermingling of civilians and combatants within state militaries and the fact that a growing number of military functions are now being performed by civilians (Blum 2010; Melzer 2009).

Such changes in the nature of warfare have thus made the principle of distinction more difficult to justify conceptually, and also more difficult to follow in practice (Blum 2010). Civilians, it seems, are more likely to suffer from arbitrary targeting,

while combatants are at increased risk of being targeted by those whom they cannot distinguish from the civilian population (Melzer 2009). Hence, while the modern protection regime has (in theory at least) afforded greater protection to civilians, it seems that it has also inadvertently encouraged combatants to assume civilian identities, thereby increasing the risks for combatants of attempting to apply the principle of distinction (Blum 2010). In addition, given the extent to which men are relatively ill-protected, whether as combatants or civilians, it would appear that the changes which have occurred in the nature of modern warfare have only served to increase their vulnerability to the effects of conflict-related violence, as is evidenced by the disproportionate number of male deaths as a result of the conflicts within both Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine.<sup>60</sup>

### **5.5.2 The Purity of Civilian Identity**

In addition to the practical difficulties involved in distinguishing combatants from civilians, there is often deep scepticism in relation to the purity of civilian identity, and, hence, the extent to which civilians deserve protection (Slim 2008). As Slim states (2008), the civilian ethic requires that the same identity is attributed to a large group of people regardless of their roles, identities or interests. However, allocating a single identity to a diverse group may be considered to be engaging in positive stereotyping (Slim 2008), or of presuming innocence to which they may not be entitled (De Búrca 2014). For Slim (2008), therefore, those who engage in armed conflict often have difficulty in accepting that a person's civilian identity should erase their other roles and identities, and thus makes a convincing argument that those who kill civilians often do so because they cannot truly accept that civilians exist outside the theatre of war, untainted by the moral implications of its conduct.

Throughout history, civilians, whilst perhaps avoiding direct participation in hostilities, have nevertheless often contributed to war efforts by supplying conflicting parties with food, equipment and weapons, and by lending them their economic, administrative and political support (Melzer 2009). Moreover, civilians continue to provide such forms of support during contemporary armed conflict, their liability for which continues to vex lawyers and philosophers alike (Gross 2012).

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<sup>60</sup> As noted within Chapter 2, ninety-one per cent of all those who lost their lives as a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland were male (Harland 2011), as were ninety-four per cent of the 4,228 Palestinians who lost their lives between September 2000 and July 2007 (UNOCHA 2007).

Civilian identity has thus been, and continues to be, imbued with economic, social and political ambiguity – to the extent that warring parties have often viewed civilians, including women and children, to be more non-innocent than innocent (Slim 2008). Indeed, it is argued that the use of rape as a weapon of war has often been used against (non-innocent) women due to the integral nature of their role in the preservation of the nation’s culture and the production of new enemies (Kohn 1994; Diken and Laustsen 2005; Slim 2008).

Yet it would appear that changes in the nature of warfare over the last century or so have exacerbated suspicions in relation to the purity of civilian identities. During so-called “people’s wars,” for example, which often involved guerrilla campaigns fought by communal groups against state actors or other non-state groups, the divisions between combatants and civilians frequently became blurred (Henderson and Singer 2002: 166). During such campaigns the support of civilian populations was also considered to be of critical importance. Mao, for instance, was of the belief that warfare was inseparable from the masses, while Guevara spoke about the importance of reaching “an intimacy with the people” and of obtaining their “absolute cooperation” (Slim 2008: 207).

In turn, with the involvement of the masses, it seems that the extent to which civilian populations are thought to be deserving of protection has increasingly been called into question (Slim 2008). With regard to Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine, for example, it seems that the frequency of attacks carried out by those indistinguishable from their civilian counterparts has meant that the respective civilian populations have often been viewed with widespread suspicion. Within Northern Ireland former British soldiers have spoken of how they considered all those living within nationalist communities to be their enemies, regardless of their actual levels of conflict participation (Cunningham and Peto 2018). Moreover, Israeli forces continue to routinely fire live ammunition at Palestinian demonstrators and recently defended the killing of more than one hundred Palestinians who were protesting along the Gazan border by arguing that they were “part of the armed conflict” (BBC News 2018).<sup>61</sup> Indeed, given the extent to which men often struggle to credibly

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<sup>61</sup> This is despite the fact that Rupert Colville, a spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, has argued that those protesting did not pose a threat to life or serious injury, and

assert their civilian identities (Hirsch 2012), it would appear their innocence is seen as particularly suspect in the modern era, as again, can be evidenced with reference to the disproportionate number of male deaths within both Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine.

## **5.6 The Current State of Civilian Protection**

The modern realities of warfare are, therefore, in stark contrast to the conditions which prevailed during the drafting of the First Geneva Convention, when it was usual for armies to confront each other on battlefields within clearly defined frontiers (Melzer 2009). Indeed, the profound nature of such changes has led some to question the continued relevance of the principle of distinction (Sweney 2005). Certainly the conflicts in both Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine have been characterised by members of non-state armed groups carrying out attacks on civilians with scant regard for the principle of distinction, examples of which may include the 1978 bombing of the La Mon Hotel near Belfast, Northern Ireland, or the 2001 bombing of the HaSharon Shopping Mall near Netanya, Israel (Belfast Telegraph 2008; Bergman 2018).<sup>62</sup> In addition, the ability (or perhaps willingness) of the British and Israeli security forces to distinguish such persons from their civilian counterparts has also been found wanting, as evidenced, for example, by the events of Bloody Sunday in Derry, Northern Ireland, or the recent Israeli response to Gazan protestors. For Sweney (2005: 737) therefore, the widespread violation of the principal in the modern world has led him to conclude that it is no longer fit for purpose and should be replaced with a more nuanced doctrine that is both “practical” and “fair.”

However, while it may be premature to say that the principle of distinction is now obsolete, it is certainly the case that civilians have become extremely vulnerable to the effects of armed conflict (Rothbart et al. 2012) (civilian men perhaps particularly so). During World War One, for instance, approximately five per cent of all those who lost their lives were civilians. By World War Two that figure had risen to approximately fifty per cent, and by the 1990’s civilians were accounting for up to

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hence that there were insufficient grounds for the use of the live ammunition as specified within international human rights law (BBC News 2018).

<sup>62</sup> Twelve people were killed when an IRA bomb exploded at the La Mon Hotel on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1978 (Belfast Telegraph 1998), while five people lost their lives after a suicide bomber blew himself up outside the HaSharon Shopping Mall on 18th May 2001 (Bergman 2018).

ninety per cent of all casualties of armed conflict (Chesterman 2001). In fact, during the war in the DRC (1997-2003), combatants were said to have accounted for only six per cent of all conflict-related deaths, although many civilians were said to have perished, not as a result of direct violence but due to the deprivation of essential needs (Rothbart et al. 2012).

While civilians have not suffered to the same extent within either Northern Ireland or Israel-Palestine, they have nevertheless accounted for a significant proportion of all conflict-related deaths. Of the 3,532 who lost their lives as a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland between 14th July 1969 and 31st December 2001, 1840 were civilian, which represents fifty-two per cent of all deaths (Sutton 2001).<sup>63</sup> Similarly within the Occupied Territories and Israel, of the 5,501 Palestinians who lost their lives between 1st January 2008 and 27th June 2019, 2,883 were civilian, which is also equivalent to fifty-two per cent of all such deaths (UNOCHA 2019b).<sup>64</sup>

However, as has been noted in Chapter 3, during the period the British government did not formally recognise that an armed conflict was occurring in Northern Ireland (McWilliams and Ni Aoláin 2013), and thus did not (formally) acknowledge the pervasiveness of civilian suffering or the applicability of human rights law. It did, however, implicitly acknowledge the political nature of the violence in a number of ways. For instance, the Prevention of Terrorism Act defined terrorism as “the use of violence for political ends”, special category status was conceded to politically motivated prisoners, and agents of the state regularly engaged in politically motivated killings (Ni Aoláin 2000: 230). The violence in Northern Ireland was thus recognised by the agents involved as a *de facto* armed conflict, and hence Common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention, which states that those not taking an active part should be treated humanely (American Red Cross 2011), can be said to be applicable within this context without official state acquiescence (Ni Aoláin 2000). By contrast, within the Occupied Territories, Israel continues to defend its use of lethal force against (those it recognises) as civilians, by arguing that the law of armed conflict permits such force to be used to counteract mass disturbances (Cohen 2018).

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<sup>63</sup> The Sutton Index of Death, which is referred throughout the thesis (as Sutton 2001), provides information on the deaths which occurred as a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland during the aforementioned period (14<sup>th</sup> July 1969 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2001).

<sup>64</sup> 4,937 of these deaths occurred in the Gaza Strip. By comparison there were 236 Israeli fatalities over the same period, seventeen of whom were civilian, which equivalent to seventy per cent of all such fatalities (UNOCHA 2019b).

Indeed, around the world it seems that civilians continue to be regularly targeted by both state and non-state groups alike (De Búrca 2014). For example, of the 42,972 people killed or injured as a result of explosive weapons in 2017, almost three out of every four were civilian. When such weapons were deployed in populated areas, civilians were said to have accounted for ninety-two per cent of all victims (UN Secretary General 2018). What is more, as noted by the United Nations (UN) Secretary General in his 2018 report on the *Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, the prospect of increased adherence to the laws governing the protection of civilians remains bleak. Civilian vulnerability during conflict, therefore, continues to represent a grave challenge for the international community (Rothbart et al. 2012).

The last century has thus revealed the frailty of the principle of distinction and, indeed, the civilian protection regime more broadly (Kinsella 2011). As has been noted above, however, the principle does contain an appreciation of military necessity (Melzer 2009), and so civilians are only protected as far as this necessity may allow (Kinsella 2011; Rothbart et al. 2012). Moreover, the principle of proportionality also recognises that war cannot be conducted without inadvertently affecting the innocent (Blum 2010). Thus, the application of the principle does not require the absolute protection of civilians, but instead aims to limit the harm they may be exposed to during the conduction of hostilities (Gross 2012). Nonetheless, by any measure it would appear that in many parts of the world civilians are currently woefully ill served by the instruments which aim to protect them from the most egregious effects of armed conflict, as is evidenced by the continued loss of a significant number of civilian lives within the Occupied Territories.<sup>65</sup>

### **5.6.1 Contemporary Civilian Protection and Masculinities**

By examining the development of civilian protection regime, we can thus reach a more holistic understanding of who civilians are, and what the law of armed conflict aims to protect them from. In exploring the changes which have occurred in the nature of warfare over the last century we can see the extent to which civilians are

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<sup>65</sup> For example, of the seventy-six Palestinians who lost their lives as a result of the conflict between 24th December 2018 and 27th June 2019, sixty-three (or eighty-three per cent) were civilian, forty-two of who lost their lives within the Gaza Strip. By comparison, there were nine Israeli deaths in the corresponding period (9th December 2018 – 4th May 2019), including four civilians deaths (UNOCHA 2019b).

now often exposed, rather than protected, from the worst effects of armed violence. Furthermore, by investigating the gendered assumptions present within the civilian protection regime we can more fully appreciate how the protection needs of civilian men tend to be overlooked, thus serving to increase the vulnerability to which this group are exposed.

Recognising the extent to which civilian men are vulnerable to harm permits us to more fully comprehend the ways in which modern warfare may threaten or place significant stress on the masculine sense of self (Dolan 2002; Lwambo 2013). As noted within Chapter 2, while war has often been conceived of as an arena which allows for displays of masculine prowess and virility (Friðriksdóttir 2018), exploring the nature of the protection regime as it relates to contemporary armed conflict facilitates an appreciation of how war can also be experienced as disempowering, humiliating, or even emasculating (Linos 2009; Foster 2011; Lwambo 2013; Porter 2013).

It would appear, therefore, that it is imperative to recognise that the vulnerability to which civilian men are often exposed, as a result of gender bias within international human rights law (Hirsch 2012), has consequences in terms of male identity. Certainly, within both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories there was evidence that the respective conflicts served to challenge male identities in a variety of ways (as will be further discussed within subsequent chapters). Within both of these contexts, it was not the only the case that civilians failed to have their identities adequately acknowledged, but also that the identities of civilian men were particularly tenuous given the extent to which they failed to epitomise those deemed to be “ideal” civilians (Hirsch 2012: 254). Thus, examining the frail and gendered nature of the civilian protection regime, with reference to Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories, allows us to locate the experiences and identities of civilian men in relation to the realities of modern warfare.

## **5.7 The Male Body and Conflict**

Civilian bodies increasingly occupy the spaces within which modern warfare is waged. At the level of practice, while the civilian protection regime may aim to protect vulnerable bodies, the tendency to overlook the protection needs of civilian men means that their bodies are often exposed, in a very real way, to the effects of

armed conflict. For this group, therefore, the management and protection of their bodies would appear critical to strategies aimed at reducing their vulnerability within conflict-affected spaces. Furthermore, given the centrality of body to the construction of masculinity (Connell 2005), it would seem that such strategies are also integral to the performances of male identity within such spaces.

### **5.7.1 The Body as a Material and Social Construction**

In order however to explore the links between bodily vulnerability and civilian masculinity, it would appear necessary to examine how the body has been understood within sociological and gender scholarship. On one level, it has been understood as a “material, animate organisation of flesh, organs, nerves...” (Grosz 1999: 382). Bodies are thus concrete biological structures; something which human beings have and indeed are (Turner 1996; Grosz 1999). Bodies can engender, give birth and feel pleasure, but they can also get sick, feel pain and die. They are physically diverse to begin with and become perhaps even more diverse with age. Their materiality, therefore, matters, and there is an irreducible bodily dimension to both experience and practice (Connell 2005).

That said, however, while the body remains a physical and biological entity, it can also be understood in terms of social processes (Shilling 1993). As Erving Goffman (cited in Shilling 1993) has noted, the management of the body is central to the maintenance of social encounters, social roles and social relations, and thus is transformed as a result of its participation in society. Within the social sphere, the body is marked not only by sex, but also by markers such as race, class, social status and sexuality to name but a few (Shildrick and Price 1999). Within this sphere, the body can be viewed not so much as a biological given, but as a “social creation of immense complexity...variability, richness and power” (Synnott 1993: 4). Indeed, for Foucault (cited in Shilling 1993), the body in effect vanishes within the social sphere and instead becomes a social invention of infinite malleability.

The body has also been identified as a primary symbol of the self and as the most immediate symbol of the social self (Hastings and Wilson 1999; Synnott 1993; Turner 1996). It has the ability to communicate signs and messages about self-identity, and so the process of making and becoming a body is intimately linked to the making of the self (Swain 2003). It is, therefore, understood that the body is

inseparable from self-identity and also of critical importance to the performance of gender identity. Indeed, gender identity is said to be vulnerable when bodily performances are restricted as a result of injury or physical disability (Connell 2005), thus underlining the extent to which the ability to intervene in social life is contingent upon the management of the body across space and time (Shilling 1993).

In addition, as Foucault (1991, cited in Bakare-Yusuf 1999) notes, the body always exists within a political field, and, therefore, may be subjected to prejudices, discrimination, and indeed pain (Synnott 1993; Bakare-Yasuf 1999). Power relations thus have an immediate hold upon the body and can determine how it is invested, marked or trained (Foucault 1991). He further argues that power is contingent upon the command of space and on the command of bodies that move within politically marked spaces (cited in Feldman 1991). For Foucault therefore (cited in Shilling 1993), it is ultimately the body which connects daily practice with the large-scale organisation of (gendered) power, a theme which will be further discussed below with particular reference to the operation of checkpoint regime within the Occupied Territories.

Theorising the body, however, has often proven to be a difficult task, and ideas on its meaning, social utility and moral value have changed dramatically over time (Synnott 1993). In recent decades, feminism has been particularly influential in shaping how the body has been conceptualised (Whitehead 2002), and has drawn attention to the changeable, malleable and contingent nature of embodiment within modern societies (Turner 1996). In addition, it has highlighted how western societies have often had a great fear and even hatred of the body (Gatens 1999), and also the extent to which women's bodies have been subjected to patriarchal social control (Turner 1996).

Feminism has also concerned itself to a significant extent with the materiality of the body, and with the materiality of the female body in particular. It has shown how, in contrast to the self-contained male body, the female body has historically been viewed as intrinsically unpredictable, disruptive, and therefore inferior (Shildrick and Price 1999), the unstable body dominating and threatening the fragile female mind (Shilling 1993). It has thus illustrated how women have been defined, categorised and held back by their natural bodily processes (Shildrick and Price

1999). In fact, it would appear that the conceptualisation of women's bodies as unstable and/or vulnerable has to a significant extent persisted, as can be seen within the gendered outworking of the civilian protection regime.

By contrast, while the female body has been extensively theorised within feminist scholarship, there have been comparatively fewer attempts to conceptualise the gendered nature of the male body (Shildrick and Price 1999; Whitehead 2002). Women, it seems, have often been thought to be their bodies in a way that hard-bodied and impermeable males have not (Shildrick, and Price 1999; Gorman-Murray and Hopkins 2014). As noted above, however, scholars such as Connell (2005) and Whitehead (2002) have noted how the body and bodily performances are central to the construction of masculinities, and how male identities may be vulnerable if such performances cannot be sustained (Connell 2005).

Connell (2005) has highlighted some of the dangers to which male bodies are disproportionately exposed, including occupational hazards, violent injuries, and early deaths. While manual workers may define their masculinity through their labour, the nature of such work may mean that they are often vulnerable to injury through the very medium which illustrates their strength and virility (Connell 2005; Mankayi 2008). The loss of strength, virility and independence can thus represent a significant challenge to the construction of masculinity as constituted through bodily performance (Gill et al. 2005). Recognising the vulnerability of masculinity to the effects of bodily injury, therefore, would appear critical to understanding the ways in which violent conflict may have profound impact upon both male bodies and identities, as is now discussed below.

### **5.7.2 Bodily Vulnerability, Identity and Conflict**

As noted above, the vulnerability of the male body has often gone unnoticed, and it would seem societies often have an uncomfortable relationship with men who have suffered debilitating, conflict-related injuries. While there may be recognition that men who participate in, or are affected by conflict, may lose their lives, it would seem that there remains a reluctance to accept that male bodies are not impenetrable up to the point of death, or that conflict may leave such bodies severely incapacitated. Ultimately, therefore, it would appear that societies often struggle to accept the extent to which conflict can disrupt gendered understanding of the

(impenetrable) male body and its role within society as defined by bodily performance.

Furthermore, due to the rather rigid societal conceptions of the male body, it would appear that men who have been injured as a result of conflict often struggle to come to terms with the loss of their strength, virility, or independence, i.e. the things that allow them to define their masculinity through bodily performance. For instance, their injuries may limit the extent to which they feel they are able to provide for or protect their families (Lwambo 2013); roles which are often closely associated with the construction and affirmation of masculinities (Safilos-Rothschild 2000; Wright 2014; Christensen and Rasmussen 2015; Friðriksdóttir 2018). For men, therefore, who have been in some way incapacitated as result of conflict-related violence, there may be a significant disparity between their and/or society's expectations of masculinity and their ability to live up to such expectations as a result of their diminished physical abilities. Undoubtedly, as Marini (2005) contends, a permanent disability may challenge the very essence of one's male identity.

It has also been recognised that there is a correlation between men's experiences of war and their mental health in its aftermath (Vess et al. 2013),<sup>66</sup> and it seems the loss of some aspect(s) of one's masculine identity as a result of a conflict-related, bodily experience may have a significant and negative impact upon mental health. Indeed, theorists have noted that while traits associated with traditional masculinity (such as endurance and perseverance) may have the potential to aid recovery, they also argue that men who seek to maintain their masculine ideals by refusing help or attempting to function independently may be at a higher risk of depression when they realise their disabilities can no longer be ignored (Good et al. 2006). Moreover, poor mental health may of itself affect one's masculine sense of self or the perception of one's masculine identity in the eyes of one's family or community. In short, therefore, the extent to which men are vulnerable to both physical and psychological damage as a result of conflict calls into question the perception that war primarily involves the pursuit of strategic aims by brave masculine warriors who must either emerge victorious or die heroic deaths (Farrag no date available).

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<sup>66</sup> Vess et al (2013) have noted this correlation with reference to the aforementioned IMAGES study conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

If we turn our attention towards Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine, we can gain an appreciation of the extent of conflict-related injuries among those living within conflicted societies. For example, as noted in Chapter 4, estimates of the number of those who were physically injured as a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland range from 8,333 to 100,000 (Hamber and Gallagher 2014). It has also been noted how the conflict has taken its toll on the mental health of the region, with demand for mental health services twenty-five per cent higher than the rest of the UK (Hamber and Gallagher 2014), while addiction to prescription drugs is said to be at “epidemic levels” (Smyth 2018). In addition, drug-related deaths among males have doubled in the last ten years, particularly within areas of socio-economic deprivation (NISRA 2019), i.e. the areas which have been most affected by conflict-related violence (Harland and McCready 2015).

Similarly, between 2000 and early 2009, over 35,000 Palestinians alone were said to have suffered physical injuries (Batniji et al. 2009), and a further 98,807 have been injured between early 2010 and July 2019 (UNOCHA 2019b).<sup>67</sup> The mental health impacts of the conflict have also been significant. For example, the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder among Palestinian children and adolescents is estimated to be between twenty-three and seventy per cent (Dimitry 2011), while significant numbers of adults are also thought to be suffering from the condition (Canetti et al. 2010).<sup>68</sup> Given, therefore, the extent to which the construction and affirmation of masculinity is dependent upon bodily performance, such data would suggest that conflict-related injuries have had a significant impact upon both the mental health and gendered performances of a substantial number of men residing within these societies.

## **5.8 The Management of the Body and the Checkpoint Regime**

Given the profound impact that conflict-related injuries may have upon male bodies and identities, it would appear that men in conflict-affected societies often attempt to

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<sup>67</sup> A high proportion of such injuries have occurred during in recent years, with 31,723 occurring in 2018 alone (UNOCHA 2019b).

<sup>68</sup> Among the 1,200 Palestine adults who participated in the study, over twenty per cent of those from the West Bank and Gaza were found to be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, while 16.1 per cent of those from East Jerusalem were affected by the condition (Canetti et al. 2010).

carefully manage their bodies in the hope of avoiding such injuries.<sup>69</sup> Theidon (2009), for example, has described how Mario, a former member of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), had been taught how to hold his body so as not to give any information away during interactions with Colombian soldiers. However, as a civilian Mario felt the way he held his face often revealed the imprints of his militarised past. Hence, within this conflict-affected context, Mario was convinced that despite his best efforts his body was liable to continually betray him, the consequences of which could presumably affect his safety and/or prosperity.

This research also examines the ways in which the participants of both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories attempted to reduce their vulnerabilities by managing their bodies within conflict-affected spaces. In relation to Northern Ireland, this is explored in relation to how the participants managed and trained their bodies so as to ensure that they could accrue the benefits associated with being identified as boxers. This included a reduced expectation that they should partake in political violence as well as and some degree of protection from the potentiality of falling victim to such violence. By contrast, within the Occupied Territories the management of the body is explored with reference to the pervasiveness of the occupation and the perceived necessity of continually exercising caution and vigilance within relatively unsafe spaces. Among such spaces, the checkpoint was perhaps the most precarious of all, as is now discussed below.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2015b) has described the ways in which Palestinians attempt to manage their bodies in order to maximise the safety and ease with which they can navigate their passage at such sites. She describes, for instance, a scenario in which, in an attempt to move a Palestinian body (undetected) across an Israeli checkpoint, those involved surmised that it would be beneficial if a bearded man was to drive a car immediately in front of the one carrying the body. Their logic was that a car driven by a bearded man was more likely to be stopped by the Israeli security forces, thus increasing the likelihood that the car immediately behind would be allowed to pass without obstruction.

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<sup>69</sup> This theme will be further discussed within Chapter 8 with reference to the data which emerged from both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories

A number of other scholars have identified checkpoints as sites at which the management of the body is of critical importance. In the context of the Occupied Territories, Hammami (2015) notes that checkpoints are sites at which the threat of violence remains ever present, thus making cautious bodily management highly necessary. From the point of view of the Israeli state, they are sites which aim to manage potentially dangerous or criminal (Palestinian) bodies (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009). Broadly speaking, therefore, checkpoints are sites at which the power of the state can be inscribed upon the body (Hastings and Wilson 1999). They are also sites at which identities are checked (Anishchenkova 2016), and where concepts such as citizenship, nationality and ethnicity become inherently significant (Davydova and Pöllänen 2011). They are thus sites at which bodily experiences inevitably become intersectional (Davydova and Pöllänen 2011).

Checkpoints are also sites which lend themselves to the examination of civilian identity. In relation to the Occupied Territories, Kechet (2006) argues that an important function of these sites is to illustrate visible military control over Palestinian civilians. As Amir (2014) point out, at such sites Palestinians can clearly see that their unarmed bodies are effectively powerless vis-a-vis those of their armed Israeli counterparts. Moreover, in recent years Mansbach (2009) states that the checkpoints have been operating within a state of exception, whereby the Israeli state has suspended civil liberties and replaced them with a military legal order. At these closed military areas, soldiers are considered to be the sole bearers of authority, and there is little or no space for civilian intervention or criticism. As a result, Mansbach (2009) argues that violence at checkpoints has become both explicit and legitimate, yet rarely seen or acknowledged by the Israeli public.

At such sites, therefore, civilian protection is clearly found wanting, and thus from a Palestinian perspective the careful management of the body is essential in order to avoid falling victim to state violence. As suggested above, the control of bodies at checkpoints would also appear to have the potential to have a profound effect upon conceptions of Palestinian masculinity. As Palestinian men are questioned, searched and ordered around at such sites, they are often associated with a lack of power and control, and, hence, may be experienced as feminising and/or emasculating (Namaan 2006; Greenburg 2009; Foster 2011). Thus for Keshet (2006), the checkpoints, both physically and symbolically, embody both the occupation and the subduing of one

nation by another, and have robbed Palestinian men of their ability to provide and protect and left them vulnerable to the whims of the Israeli security forces.

Scholarship on the checkpoint regime within the Occupied Territories thus serves to illustrate the significance of the material nature of bodies. While bodies have often been primarily regarded as the sum of war's collateral damage (Fluri 2011), greater acknowledgment of their corporality may reveal much about the experience of violent conflict and its impact upon gender roles and identities. In particular, a greater appreciation of the corporality of the bodies of civilian men may help to redress the extent to which such bodies have been overlooked within both humanitarian policy and practice. Moreover, it may also provide a prism through which to explore the masculine identities of those within this group both during and after violent conflict.

## **5.9 Conclusion**

In examining the legal and philosophical underpinnings of the civilian and the male body respectively, this chapter has sought to locate male vulnerability during conflict within a historical context much shaped by the influence of gender ideology. It has discussed the legal developments which gave rise to the category of people we now think of as civilians, and has charted how changes in the nature of warfare have often served to place those within this group at great peril. It has also explored the ways in which gendered interpretations of the category have often limited the ability of men to credibly assert their status as civilians, thus leaving them (particularly) vulnerable to the effects of armed conflict.

In addition, the chapter has drawn attention to the corporality of civilian suffering, with particular reference to the large number of injuries sustained as a result of the conflicts within both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It has highlighted the under-theorisation of the male body within scholarship, and the extent to which the material nature of male bodies has also been overlooked by those charged with civilian protection. It has argued that the experience of bodily vulnerability can have a significant impact upon how civilian masculinities are constructed and affirmed within conflicted societies and has done so with particular reference to the management of bodies at Israeli security checkpoints. The chapter, therefore, has linked (gendered) civilian protection, bodily vulnerability and male

identity in a manner conducive to a more holistic understating of the performance of civilian masculinities within conflict-affected societies.

In the chapter which follows, I examine the key themes which emerged from the data collected within Northern Ireland, and explore the role which boxing played in the lives of the participants despite the presence of ongoing political violence.

## Chapter 6: Boxing, Salvation and Civilian Masculinities

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the key themes which emerged from the data collected during field work in Northern Ireland. It explores how the Northern Irish conflict, or the Troubles, impacted upon the lives and identities of civilian men, a group which (as noted previously) has largely been overlooked within scholarship on gender and conflict (Foster 2011). More specifically, the chapter examines the lives and identities of those involved in a popular (Northern) Irish sport during this period, namely boxing. Notably, while the data derived from detailed interactions with men in this context offers insights on its own terms, it can also speak to the experiences of civilian men more broadly and hence has resonance beyond the confines of this site of conflict.

Perhaps most significantly, the data reveal how a significant majority of the research participants felt that they (and/or their peers) had found salvation within the sport despite, or perhaps in response to, the ongoing political violence within their communities.<sup>70</sup> This chapter, therefore, seeks to investigate how the sport created conditions within which salvation was possible with reference to their masculine identities and experiences, including the role played by boxing coaches in terms of modelling masculinities and the sanctuary which men found within their boxing clubs during the period.

Furthermore, the chapter examines the masculine status seemingly afforded to those who pursued the sport, as well as its apparent transcendence of community divisions even in the midst of conflict. The role played by the sport within post-agreement Northern Ireland is also discussed, as is the somewhat distinctive nature of boxing identity and its relationship to the body and working-class masculinity. I suggest that the sport offered alternatives to the militarised forms of masculinity present within working-class communities both during and after conflict. I argue, therefore, that

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<sup>70</sup>When participants used this term (or variations of it), it seems that they were seeking to convey, in an almost biblical sense, the role that the sport had played in their lives in terms of saving, rescuing or delivering them from the harm which may otherwise have befallen them. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word used most often to signify salvation was *yasa*, meaning to save, rescue, deliver or set free. By contrast in the New Testament the Hebrew term *soteria* signifies spiritual deliverance, though this may also include material preservation (Bible Study Tools 2018). The way the term was used by participants would, therefore, appear to incorporate elements of both interpretations.

boxing in this context may be considered a peacebuilding intervention, one that utilised prevalent notions of masculinity in order to steer young men away from a path of political violence or criminality.

## **6.2 Civilian Men in the Northern Irish Context**

### **6.2.1 Background Information**

As noted within Chapter 4, while men's participation in the conflict in Northern Ireland was considered normative (Ashe and Harland 2014), and men from both sides of the community were viewed as "natural combatants" (Ashe 2012: 239), those who participated in this study took a different course. They were, to the best of my knowledge, civilians who did not take up arms or participate in the pursuit of political violence. Instead, they chose to devote a significant proportion of their lives to the pursuit of boxing. Their contributions, therefore, serve to highlight that the relationship between men, masculinity, and political conflict is more complex than simplistic associations between men and war making (McKeown and Sharoni 2002).

In order to more fully understand the experiences of participants, it is necessary to examine the environments within which they lived during the conflict period. For over two-thirds of participants, such environments were within the greater Belfast area. During this period, Belfast was characterised by a variety of conflict facets including sectarian divides, the ghettoization of communities, widespread destruction of property and heavy militarisation (Ni Aoláin 2000). Almost half of all conflict-related deaths occurred within the city (Lundy and McGovern 2002), and as a council area Belfast suffered a conflict-related death rate of 4.3 per one thousand between 1969 and 1999, the highest of any council area in Northern Ireland (Boydell et al. 2008). Those who lived within Belfast, therefore, suffered disproportionately from the effects of conflict violence.

Furthermore, while some parts of Belfast were relatively sheltered from such violence, the overwhelming majority of study participants experienced the conflict primarily in either the north or west of the city, i.e. the areas which saw the highest levels of conflict violence (Mesev et al. 2009). In the north of the city 577 people lost their lives, while in the west the conflict cost 623 lives. By contrast, only 341

people lost their lives in either the south or east of the city (Sutton 2001).<sup>71</sup> Indeed, the north and west experienced the highest levels of conflict violence not only within Belfast but within Northern Ireland as a whole (Coulter 1999).

Of the remaining participants, a significant majority had lived within the city of Derry during the period. In Derry, conflict-related violence claimed the lives of 227 people (Sutton 2001). This was equivalent to 1.74 deaths per thousand, the 6<sup>th</sup> highest death rate as defined by council area (Boydell et al. 2008). Conflict-related violence within the city was thus generally less intense than it was in Belfast. Those who participated in the study, however, were predominantly from nationalist areas which experienced disproportionately high levels of conflict violence (see Figure 5). Such areas also witnessed some of the key events particularly during the early stages of the conflict, such as the Battle of the Bogside and Bloody Sunday.<sup>72</sup>

It is also important to note that the overwhelming majority of participants came from areas characterised not only by high levels of conflict intensity, but also social deprivation. Within Belfast for example, Mesev et al. (2009) note that the vast majority of conflict deaths occurred within areas characterised by high levels of deprivation as measured by the Robson index.<sup>73</sup> Hence, the north and west of the city were characterised not only by high levels of conflict violence, but also by some of the highest levels of social deprivation, poverty and educational underachievement in the province (Harland and McCready 2015). By contrast, and as noted above, the more affluent areas of Belfast such as the south and the east of the city experienced much lower levels of violence (see Figure 4), a pattern also found in Derry. Indeed, some of the wealthiest areas of Northern Ireland, such as north Down, were by comparison almost untouched by conflict violence (Coulter 1999). The life chances and conflict experiences of participants, therefore, were undoubtedly shaped by their position within Northern Ireland's social structure which was deeply differentiated along class lines (Coulter 1999).

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<sup>71</sup> These figures, and those cited below relating to the Sutton Index of Death, have been created using the cross-tabulations function on the Conflict Achieve on the Internet (CAIN) Website.

<sup>72</sup> The Battle of the Bogside involved a 50-hour confrontation during which the residents of the Bogside rioted and threw petrol bombs at police following an Orange March within the city (Byrne 2015).

<sup>73</sup> The Robson index incorporates nine measures of health, education, family, shelter, physical environment, income, and employment to quantify deprivation (Mesev et al. 2009).

Furthermore, as noted within previous chapters, of all the victims of the conflict in Northern Ireland ninety-one per cent were male. The high death rate among males cannot, however, be solely attributed to their comparatively high levels of conflict participation (Harland 2011). In north Belfast for example, 333 of the 519 male victims were civilian, while there were 315 of 579 civilian victims in west Belfast and 72 of 214 in Derry.<sup>74</sup> In percentage terms, sixty-four per cent of all male victims in north Belfast were civilian, while in west Belfast and Derry such figures stood at fifty-four per cent and almost thirty-four per cent respectively (Sutton 2001). Hence, within north and west Belfast civilian males lost their lives in greater number than their armed counterparts, their status as civilians clearly affording them little protection from conflict-related violence. Such data again illustrate that conflict is deeply gendered in the sense that it is men who suffer disproportionately from conflict violence (Jones 2004; Vess et al. 2013; Wright 2014).

It was also the case that males within nationalist communities, i.e. the areas from where a significant majority of participants were drawn, were particularly vulnerable to conflict violence. Such communities had to contend with such violence from both British military forces and loyalist paramilitaries. Indeed, the latter groups were responsible for killing upwards of ten times more civilians than paramilitary members between 1969 and 1993 (Coulter 1999), the application of international law or the principle of distinction clearly being disregarded by such groups. In all, almost twice as many Catholic civilian males lost their lives during the conflict as compared to their Protestant counterparts (Sutton 2001).

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<sup>74</sup> Such victims were defined by Sutton (2001) as civilians, in that, they were not members of either state security forces or paramilitary organisations.

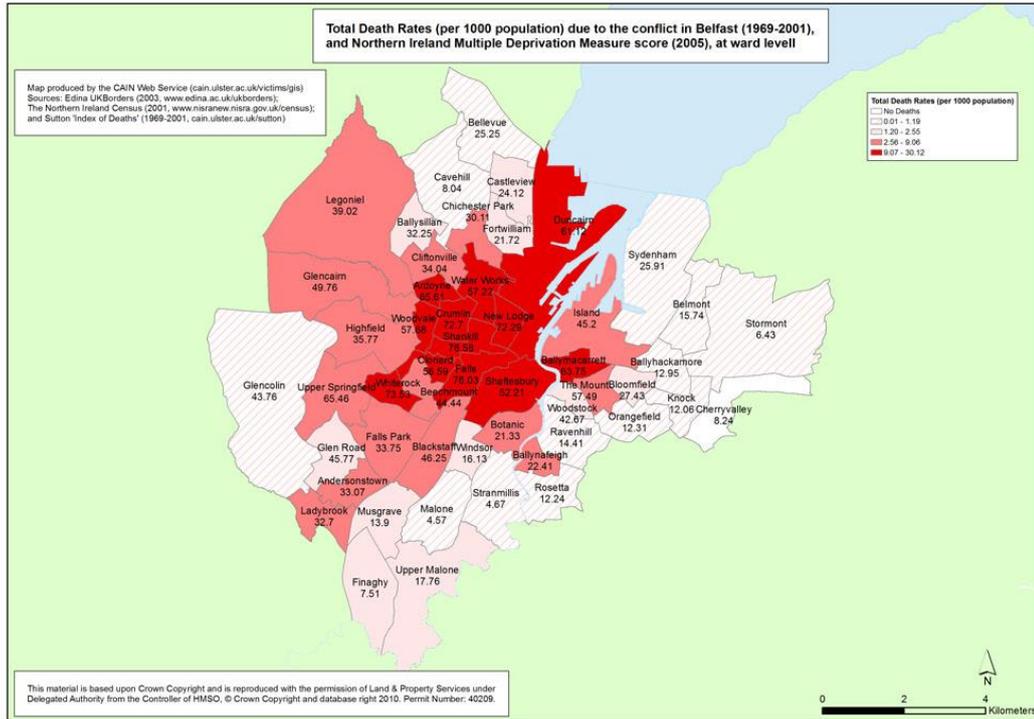


Figure 4: Conflict Death Rates and Multiple Deprivation Scores, Belfast (CAIN Web Service 2010a)

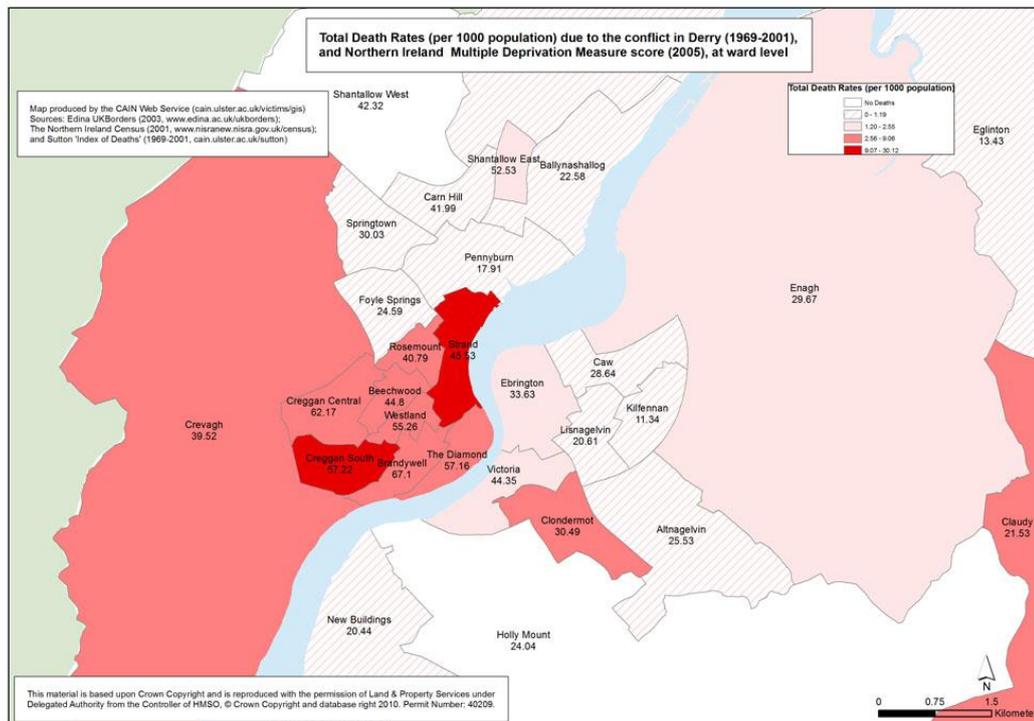


Figure 5: Conflict Death Rates and Multiple Deprivation Scores, Derry (CAIN Web Service 2010b)

### **6.2.2 Intersecting Vulnerabilities**

The background information outlined above helps to put the conflict experiences of participants, as civilian males, in context. As noted above, the overwhelming majority of study participants lived their lives in either north or west Belfast or Derry City, i.e. working-class areas which were disproportionately affected by social deprivation and conflict violence (Harland and McCready 2015). As males, the risk which the conflict posed to their lives was greatly increased on account of their gender. Moreover, their status as civilians afforded them little protection against conflict violence, particularly so within the aforementioned areas of Belfast.

Applying an intersectional analysis can enable us to take account of social categories and identities (Ni Aoláin and Rooney 2007), and can shed light on how gender intersects with other forms of identity (Myrntinen et al. 2014). Indeed, applying this form of analysis means that we cannot examine forms of identity, such as race or class, without constantly moving towards an examination of gender (Connell 2005). Within this context, applying an intersectional analysis enables us to see how, as civilian men from working-class and predominantly nationalist communities, participants were much more vulnerable to conflict violence than, for instance, women from middle-class unionist areas. And while class based vulnerabilities have to some extent been acknowledged (as is noted above), it seems that, as is the case in many conflict contexts, the vulnerabilities of civilian men have largely been overlooked (Myrntinen et al. 2017). Even during the conflict, it seems that while the killing of women and children aroused general revulsion, Northern Ireland's unarmed men were deemed fair game (Kuper, cited in Jones 2004).

When the participants of this study shared their experiences of the conflict, it was clear that they were fully aware of the dangers within their environments and the often-precarious nature of life during the period. The extent to which they normalised conflict violence was also striking. While the participants may have remained civilian, the conflict was no less real or consequential for them than it was for their armed counterparts. As civilians, they may have been uninvolved in the direct participation of hostilities, yet they were certainly not unaffected by the conflict's consequences.

### 6.3 Boxing as Salvation

A notable majority of participants, rather than speak directly about their memories of the conflict, instead spoke about the role that boxing had played in their lives during the period. It soon became clear what a critically important role that had been. Indeed, one the most surprising findings was the number of participants who described boxing as having been their salvation, or of having been saved by the sport. While Northern Ireland is no stranger to the use of potent religious symbolism and language, and the terms above are often used particularly within the evangelical Protestant tradition, their use in this context by participants from predominantly working-class Catholic backgrounds is, nevertheless, surprising.<sup>75</sup> It is hard to imagine such a group using such terms lightly or with regularity in their day-to-day lives. It is my view, therefore, that such terms were used by participants with a gravitas that sought to express the pivotal role that the sport had played in their lives during the conflict.

But how had boxing saved participants, and from what? How exactly could their participation in this relatively violent sport constitute a form of salvation? From my interpretation of the data, it seems that during the period the sport saved participants from the dangers associated with coming of age within their respective working-class communities, including the perils of either perpetrating or falling victim to political violence. Of these dangers, however, it seems that having been guided away from a path of political violence was at the forefront of the minds of participants when they spoke about salvation. From a gendered perspective, perhaps it saved them from a form of masculinity that would have been either more violent or more vulnerable to violence than a form commonly associated with boxing. In the extracts below, Harry and Jason reveal in their own words how they felt the sport had saved them during the conflict period:<sup>76</sup>

When I think about it like (boxing) it was the saviour for me in many ways. Like if I hadn't of had the boxing...what other...? I would probably have ended up in Long Kesh (prison). And I have no doubts about it whatsoever (Interview with Harry).

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<sup>75</sup> Ulster Protestants have often viewed themselves historically as a chosen people, with Protestantism representing salvation and light in opposition to the damnation and darkness representative of Catholicism (Mitchell 2005).

<sup>76</sup> These names are, of course, pseudonyms.

You know I was in the boxing gym, the (Belfast based boxing gym) under the tutelage of (boxing coach), punching the bags, sparring, boxing became my life.<sup>77</sup> If I hadn't have had boxing I might otherwise have been out joining paramilitaries or joyriding or whatever so boxing was my salvation (Interview with Matthew).

For Maurice, boxing too had been his salvation and prevented him from joining a paramilitary group in spite of his desire to do so at the time:

I can honestly put my hand on my heart and say that boxing was my saviour. Because at that time as you know, in 1972 in Derry there wasn't a wild lot to do...And I joined (a Derry based boxing club) then when I was about eleven years of age, and I have been involved in boxing ever since. And I have no doubt in my mind that if I hadn't been involved in boxing, like a lot of young fellas of my own age, I probably would have got mixed up in the Troubles (Interview with Maurice).

Such was his belief in the crucial role that boxing had played during the conflict, Jason was of the conviction that the sport had saved "hundreds of lives" by dissuading many young men from joining paramilitaries or getting involved in criminality:

But I say honestly, boxing in this country has saved hundreds of people's lives, hundreds! You can't prove it but it has, it has. If it hasn't saved their lives it's kept them out of jail, do you know what I mean? Or kept them away, whether it's paramilitary or in jail for stealing, it's kept them away, it's given them that path, you know what I mean? (Interview with Jason).

For a large majority of participants, therefore, it seems the sport had made a critical intervention in their lives even if they avoided using the terms discussed above in an overt manner. Some, for instance, spoke about how getting involved in the sport had been the "best thing" that had ever happened to them (Interview with James;

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<sup>77</sup> The names of clubs and specific areas have been removed in order to protect the identities of participants.

Interview with Jason), or how boxing had been a “big help” whilst growing up during the conflict (Interview with Andrew), or of the power of the sport to “change people’s lives” (Interview with Conor). It was clear, therefore, that regardless of the specificity of their language use, participants felt very grateful or even “blessed” (Interview with Conor) that the sport had intervened in their lives in a positive manner.

Theidon (2009: 32) has argued that in situations of conflict, “carving out space to be a civilian and act like one is crucial.” I argue that within this context, boxing, as a powerful metaphor for masculinity (De Garis 2000), carved out space for young men to remain civilian in a way that did not feminise them or call their “hard-won” masculinities into question (Ducat 2004: 12). Having one’s masculinity questioned at any time is likely to prove deeply uncomfortable and potentially dangerous, as gay and effeminate men are often said to be the targets of prejudice and violence (Connell 2000). However, it seems that such dangers are potentially heightened during periods of conflict, as men who reject militarism have often been branded effeminate, naïve, or even politically dangerous (Higate and Hopton 2005). Securing a masculinised form of civilian identity in the midst of conflict, then, is likely to prove both reassuring and highly protective.

For civilian men in this context, it seems that gaining a secure masculine identity through their pursuit of boxing would have undoubtedly reduced the stress and sense of weakness often associated with being unable (or unwilling) to fulfil gendered expectations during conflict (Dolan 2002; Lwambo 2013). Certainly, it appears that the securing of this authentically masculine yet civilian form of identity was made possible in part as a result of the enduring connections between masculinity and sport (Delgado 2015), and masculinity and violence (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2005), which found expression within boxing.

Furthermore, it seems that the securing of this form of masculine identity was facilitated by the similarities which exist between the forms of masculinity associated with militarism and those associated with boxing. As Clarke (2008: 52) notes, military masculinity is often associated with being a “real man”, manliness being equated with the sanctioned use of violence and aggression (Myrntinen 2003). Like war, boxing has long been characterised by danger, courage and, indeed,

violence (Woodward 2007). Like the soldier, the legitimate boxer is viewed as fearless, strong, and someone with heart – in short, the definitive alpha male (Paradis 2012).

Hence, it seems that civilian men in this context used the masculinised perceptions of the sport as a way to validate or even rehabilitate their own masculine identities whilst retaining their status as civilians.<sup>78</sup> It is within these gendered parameters, therefore, that boxing appears to have offered salvation to those who pursued it during the conflict period. The sport, it seems, carved out space for young men to remain civilian in a way that did not call their masculinities into question. It thus recognised their need to secure masculine identities whilst offering alternatives to the militarised forms which were highly visible within working-class communities during the period.

### **6.3.1 Modelling Masculinities: The Role of Boxing Coaches**

The salvation which a significant majority of participants said they (and/or their peers) had found within boxing also appears to be at least partly due to the time and dedication devoted by boxing coaches to those under their tutelage. We know from cross-cultural research that models or mentors can have a significant influence on “lifelong outcomes” for teenage boys (Wilson et al. 2014: 2). It has also been argued that emotionally connected relationships between men and boys may provide for the modelling of positive forms of masculinity, forms which allow for emotional vulnerability and the transcendence of stereotypical norms (Spencer 2007). Having emotionally connected relationships and witnessing positive examples of masculinity may be particularly important during periods of conflict, when emotional trauma may take its toll on (gendered) wellbeing (Lwambo 2013), and the opportunities to embrace forms of masculinity not associated with conflict or interpersonal violence are reduced (Dolan 2002).

Within this context it appears that the close relationships which participants had with their boxing coaches ensured that they received emotional support and became familiar with forms of masculinity beyond those associated with social violence or militarism. Their coaches, it seems, modelled forms of masculinity which

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<sup>78</sup> The role that sport can play in terms of securing and rehabilitating masculine identities has been noted across a range of both geographical and sporting contexts (see Messner 1990; Sorek 2009).

transcended traditional stereotypes and were based not on wanton violence, but on the controlled use of aggression within highly regulated environments. Participants appear to have been largely receptive to the forms of masculinity modelled by their coaches, referring to such figures in brotherly, fatherly or even messianic terms. They also spoke of the many roles that their coaches would play as they attempted to nurture and guide those under their supervision, or the debt of gratitude they felt they owed them for their kindness and guidance.

In the extracts that follow, participants speak about their former coaches with reference to these themes. In the following extract, for example, Matthew describes the various roles played by his former coach, including that of “father figure”:

So, the coach at the (Belfast based boxing club) was like a father figure to us. When we turned up to go to trips, (the coach) would have washed your face and cut your hair. He would have said “look at the state of you”, because he was as straight as a die, “look at the state of you. I’m not bringing you, shame my club...Clear over here and get your hair cut” (Interview with Matthew).

Similarly, in the following extracts, the participants refer to their coaches in brotherly and messianic terms respectively, with the latter making reference to the debt of gratitude he feels towards his former mentor:

So (the trainer) and I, even though he was a trainer, he was more like a big brother to me, he wasn’t like a trainer or an official (Interview with James).

So, I’m basically doing what (my former coach) did for me. I like to think I’m doing the same for the kids nowadays, I’m passing on the same wee bit of knowledge and encouragement. You can only try your best, so you can. No (my former coach), he was a saviour, a saviour to a lot of people. And he probably doesn’t even realise... (Interview with Jason).

As alluded to by Jason, a number of those interviewed who were still involved in the sport in a coaching capacity felt that they had a duty to give back what the sport and their former coaches had given to them. In doing so, some were also very aware of the many roles which they were now expected to play, and perhaps subconsciously

of the positive forms of masculinity they were now expected to model. Harry, for example, describes how, as a boxing coach, he offers “a different range of things” to the young people who frequent his club:

But when I came back into the boxing, I really, really felt a sense of...This is where you need to be, real people, putting a wee bit back in, encouraging people on, encouraging people to develop themselves, and not just as boxers but as officials and helping people with...They would ask me quite often, (for) direction in life with one thing and another and I would try and do the best I could and direct them as best I could, and (they) probably look up to me in many ways now. I offer a different range of things, you know (Interview with Harry).

Those who were still involved in the sport in a coaching capacity also articulated how they were perceived as role models by those under their tutorship. In the extract which follows, Peter identifies the significant responsibility attached to such a position, as well as the platform it can provide for exerting a positive influence on aspiring pugilists:

I think that’s the key thing, that consistency of role models within the boxing club. You know the coach has a position of responsibility, he’s a teacher, he’s an educator, he’s a father, and those things are much wider than just teaching someone how to box. It’s those attributes and qualities that the coach has the power to develop in a positive way... (Interview with Peter).

With this context, therefore, there appears to be ample evidence to support Wilson et al.’s (2014) argument that models or mentors can have a significant influence on lifelong outcomes, as well as to support Spencer’s (2007) observation that emotionally connected relationships may provide for the modelling of positive forms of masculinity. Boxing coaches, it seems, provided examples of ways to perform civilian masculinities which, although predicated upon a rejection of political/social violence, were not based upon suggestions of cowardice or weakness. It also appears that boxing coaches displayed many of the qualities that one might associate with positive fatherhood such as care, compassion, patience and respect, modelling what

Gokani et al. (2015: 215) have referred to as “appropriate and fruitful ways of ‘being a man.’”

Such qualities appear to be in stark contrast to common perceptions of the sport as one which is saturated with hyper-masculine identities. Even those who have written on the sport from a gendered perspective have at times reinforced such perceptions, with Woodward (2007), for instance, arguing that the masculinities within the sport are a threat to the development of more caring, democratic and empathetic masculinities. By contrast, it seems that the coaches referred to do by participants embraced such forms of masculinity.

Furthermore, it seems that those still involved in the sport in a coaching capacity also embraced such forms and were very aware of their responsibility to model positive forms of masculine behaviour (and by default positive forms of masculinity) to those who were now under their tutelage. Finally, it is worth noting that the forms of masculinity modelled by boxing coaches, in terms of selfless dedication and a commitment to one’s community, may also be said to be at least partially modelled by those within paramilitary organisations; with the forms of masculinity found within both spheres marked by both their class origins and at least some commitment to chivalric values (as will be further discussed below).

### **6.3.2 The Boxing Club as a Sanctuary**

In examining the saving or protective role that the sport played in the lives of participants, it would be unwise to ignore the sanctuary provided by both boxing clubs and the environment surrounding the sport during the conflict period. As noted by Sorek (2009), a physically unsafe social environment often increases the attractiveness of fighting sports such as boxing. Within this context, the conflict certainly provided for an unsafe social environment and it seems that boxing clubs, as spaces of relative safety, were both attractive and accessible to youths from working-class communities during the period.

I have noted above how the communities within which participants lived suffered disproportionate levels of conflict violence, and how men living in these areas lost their lives in relatively large numbers. I have also noted how nationalist areas in particular, i.e. the areas within which the majority of participants lived during the

period, had to contend with both state violence and indiscriminate attacks from loyalist paramilitaries (Coulter 1999). Within such communities it seems that not even the home was a site of safety, with virtually every home within working-class nationalist areas having been searched by either the police or the army during the early years of the conflict (Sales 2002). Indeed, throughout the conflict homes within nationalist areas were searched with greater frequency and destructiveness than was the case within unionist areas (Pickering 2000). Furthermore, given the segregation of residential space in Northern Ireland, the location of one's home often acted as a marker of one's community/religious identity, which meant that the home was also often the site where sectarian killings occurred (McDowell 2008).

Given the intersecting nature of their vulnerabilities, therefore, it seems that it would have been particularly difficult for men within such communities to find spaces of safety during the conflict. While some may have found some degree of safety in their homes, McDowell (2008: 339) notes that during this period such spaces were often considered "private" and, therefore, "quintessentially feminine", which perhaps reduced their appeal for men. The sizeable number of boxing clubs which continued to operate during the conflict period, however, appear to have provided those involved in the sport with safe spaces which were nevertheless quintessentially masculine. They provided a form of sanctuary which was highly compatible with the gender aspirations of those most vulnerable to conflict violence. In the extracts which follow, the participants describe how their clubs had been safe spaces during the period, spaces which "free" from the influence of paramilitaries:

Belfast was like one of them old western cities that are derelict with tumbleweed rolling about. There was nobody running about, but still and all this was a sanctuary, this club. And the talk got around that it was a sanctuary and that anybody training here was free of paramilitaries, which was something in them days you know. People couldn't believe this! (Interview with Gavin).

The (Belfast based boxing club) became my place, my refuge, my solace, my home (Interview with Matthew).

Several participants also told of how their mothers would be reassured by knowing they were attending their respective boxing clubs. It seems that mothers were glad that their sons were involved in the sport and availing of the protection (and perhaps the distraction) which the sport provided. Harry, for example, recalled how his mother would tell others how she had “no worries” about her son whilst he was attending his club:

My mother always said to everybody “I’ve no worries about that young fella there. (I) Put him out in the morning and the only time he comes in is at night looking for his dinner. But I know he’s safe because he is down in the boxing club” (Interview with Harry).

It perhaps says something about the dangers inherent in such communities during the period that mothers were reassured that their sons were safe while participating in a relatively violent sport. It seems, however, that mothers calculated that the protection which boxing clubs provided more than compensated for whatever physical harm their sons might come to as a result of their pursuit of the sport.<sup>79</sup> It is also underscores the point that it is not just men who support and reinforce aggressive forms of masculinity, but women too.<sup>80</sup>

Interestingly, within the narratives of participants it seems that it was mothers, rather than fathers, who were reassured that their sons were training within their respective boxing clubs. Perhaps it was the case that fathers were less vocal about such concerns, or perhaps participants failed to relay their father’s concerns less they paint them as fretting in a manner considered feminine. In any case, it seems that participants largely coded protection as feminine, something primarily applicable to, and of primary concern to, women. In this respect, their narratives serve to reinforce the notion that protection during conflict is often coded feminine, even whilst

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<sup>79</sup> That mothers in this context viewed boxing as something which could help prevent their sons participating in conflict violence appears to have continued resonance in multiple contexts, as governments around the world strategise about how best to prevent the radicalisation of young men. See for example the UK’s *Prevent Strategy* on counter radicalisation (Home Office 2011).

<sup>80</sup> Within this context, women as mothers were validating a form of masculinity that was aggressive only in a sporting context. However, as noted by Theidon (2009), in situations of violence and poverty the desire to be protected and provided for mean that women often play an active role (and have an active interest) in affirming forms of masculinity that are aggressive well beyond the confines of competitive sport.

acknowledging the protection which their boxing clubs had provided during the period.

It must be noted, however, that boxing clubs were only as safe as both paramilitary and state forces permitted them to be. In particular, a level of engagement with paramilitaries was necessary to ensure that the sport could proceed relatively undeterred in the midst of conflict, a point which has also been noted by Sugden and Harvie (1995). Hence, in this sense, boxing clubs could be described as having been negotiated safe spaces. Still, the fact that such spaces were seemingly left alone and viewed as being somewhat outside the conflict seems quite remarkable and highly advantageous for those who pursued the sport during the period.

Additionally, it seems that the perception of such spaces as highly masculine contributed significantly to their protective capabilities. That those within such clubs were under the protection of those perceived to be hyper-masculine actors appears to have negated against the threat from other hyper-masculine actors of a more militarised kind. The outward similarities, therefore, between the masculine regimes ruling (or thought to rule) within boxing clubs and those ruling within paramilitary groups appears to have provided the basis for the protective capabilities of such sites, more so than any protection provided by their physical components.

It was also the case that a number of clubs were safe emotional spaces in the sense that those from both sides of the community could enter without fear of having their community/religious identity questioned. In the extract which follows, Robert describes how his club continues to operate on this inclusive basis:

The club without question provided a refuge in the midst of the conflict. The environment (at this club) is not just safe, but it's also one where you don't need to worry about religion or politics. We don't talk about religion or politics. You know the rules here, we don't talk about religion, we don't talk about politics, we don't swear, we treat gym members and gym equipment with respect and no football jerseys, football jerseys being a political thing. So, if you were wary of that, you could relax and not worry about it being an issue (Interview with Robert).

That the boxing gym can be a safe emotional space has also been noted by De Gardis (2000). De Gardis (2000) argues that emotional intimacy can be expressed within the sport as representations of boxing as both masculine and violent can deter allegations of weakness or femininity. In this setting, it also appears to be the case that perceptions of the sport as hyper-masculine allowed for caring activities to be carried out alongside hyper-masculine ones, albeit largely away from the public eye. The cutting of hair or informal counselling (as described above) did not diminish the masculine identities of boxing coaches, but rather complemented and enhanced them.

Finding spaces of emotional safety may be particularly important for men during periods of conflict, when the emotional pain or trauma experienced by at least some men is likely to be increased and spaces for the expression of such pain or trauma may be increasingly difficult to find. Within this context, however, it seems that boxing clubs were spaces within which (primarily young) men could express emotional vulnerability and receive the support of their coaches or peers. Such spaces, therefore, appear to have met at least some of the emotional needs of the young men who frequented them without compromising their masculine identities in the eyes of others.

Furthermore, it seems that boxing clubs were spaces within which patrons could hope to find something of themselves, a sense of self-worth, identity, and a feeling of being “accepted for who they are” (Interview with John). For Woodward (2007: 11), those who engage in boxing often have a strong desire to “stabilise and secure identities and a sense of belonging”, with finding or “belonging to oneself” said to be a metaphor for the establishment of a secure masculinity (Woodward 2007: 70). Thus, the gaining of a sense of belonging, self-knowledge and self-acceptance can perhaps be interpreted as the gaining of a secure masculine identity, something which (as noted above) may be particularly protective and life affirming whilst gained in the midst of conflict.

We can conclude, therefore, that whilst the protection of civilians during conflict is often coded feminine, it seems that many of those who participated in this study were grateful for both the physical protection and emotional support which their boxing clubs provided during the period. Their narratives also shed light on the

diverse roles and experiences of civilian men during conflict and also call into question our tendency to categorise women as vulnerable and men as perpetrators, a tendency which, as noted within Chapter 2, renders the concept of male vulnerability during conflict to be essentially unimaginable (Myrntinen et al. 2017).

The fact that the overwhelming majority of participants were civilian men of military age during the conflict period did not, however, mean that they were less needful or worthy of protection. On the contrary, while they may not have qualified as “paradigmatic” civilians (Kinsella 2011: 16), their protection needs were no less real or pressing than those of women, children or the elderly. Given that civilian men within this context died in relatively large numbers, one could argue that they, in fact, required greater levels of protection (and emotional support) than their “paradigmatic” counterparts. A more holistic understanding of conflict, therefore, must also consider the vulnerabilities, protection requirements and emotional needs of civilian men and boys during such periods.

### **6.3.3 Boxing as Providing Status**

As Goldstein (2003) notes, cultural norms often force men to master fear and endure trauma in order for them to claim the status of manhood. Within this context, study participants mastered their fear and endured trauma through their pursuit of boxing, and, hence, were awarded increased status within their communities. Such status, it seems, afforded participants a degree of protection against both the expectation to join paramilitaries as well as the violence perpetrated by such groups, as has been noted above. In the words of participants, the sport gave them “something to identify with...outside of the Troubles” (Interview with Harry) and afforded them “a bit of status, a bit of legitimacy” (Interview with Matthew).

Cahn and Ni Aoláin (2010) note that in many contexts men often engage in violence to gain social status, value and security within their communities. Similarly, in her work on Colombia, Theidon (2009: 17) noted how men would join paramilitary groups to enable them to feel like men “in the streets of their barrios.” Within this context it also seems that young men/boys joined boxing clubs for similar reasons such as the gaining of status, respect or legitimacy within their communities. Or, if they did not join for such reasons, they soon became aware there were certain perks associated with being a boxer.

In gaining an understanding of the status attached to boxing identities, appreciating the class-based nature of the sport, including its relationship to masculinity, is of critical importance. As Baird (2012: 183) argues, doing masculinity is dependent on the “masculinisation opportunities” available to men, which vary dramatically according to socio-economic conditions. Within this context, it seems that the sport’s broad appeal, as well as the esteem within which boxers were held, appears to have been intimately connected to the ways in which masculinities were constructed and appraised within working-class communities.

Within more middle-class areas, the opportunities available to define oneself as a man, for instance through educational achievement or employment opportunities would have been much more readily available. Within working-class communities, suffering disproportionately from the effects of conflict violence and social deprivation, however, the relative lack of employment and educational opportunities would have meant a narrower scope of options in terms of the way one could define oneself. Hence, it would seem that boxing appeared to offer young men within working-class communities a way to define their masculinities and gain masculine status in the relative absence of other viable possibilities; providing something of a bulwark against the potentially emasculating effects not just of conflict but also socio-economic exclusion (Baird 2012).

Thus, gaining status and legitimacy within such communities, whilst still retaining their status as civilians, seems to represent something of a coup for boxers. In the extracts that follow participants discuss the status afforded to them as a result of their participation in the sport. In the following extract, Maurice describes how being a boxer gave him “strength”, afforded him “respect”, and eased the “guilt” he felt for having neglected to participate in the conflict:

I found that it (being a boxer) gave me strength. It gave you a bit of respect too in the community. You know the fact...you felt a bit guilty because you weren’t in the (P)IRA<sup>81</sup>, because other young fellas that you ran around with, they were in the (P)IRA and there was a lot of guilt, I felt a lot of guilt that I wasn’t out doing the business along with them

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<sup>81</sup> Frequently, when people in Northern Ireland refer to the IRA, they are referring to the Provisional Irish Republic Army (PIRA).

ones. But in another sense it gave me the respect of being a boxer because, everybody respects you when you get into a boxing ring (Interview with Maurice).

In a similar manner, Harry describes how being a boxer afforded him “status”, “respect”, and provided him with “an excuse” in order to avoid conflict participation:

I realised then when I was coming to that age, you know when people had to make the decision to get involved in the Troubles or not, the boxing was my safety valve and it was an excuse too. And it also gave me a bit of status that I didn't have to go chasing through any paramilitary organisation, if that makes sense. And I did get respect you know, funny enough from the British Army and from the republicans (Interview with Harry).

As previously noted, it seems evident that involvement within boxing afforded participants a degree of protection from paramilitary (or perhaps even state) violence.<sup>82</sup> For James, this was due to the fact that “paramilitaries on both sides of the divide respect(ed) amateur boxers.” In the extracts which follow, the participants suggest that there was a written, or perhaps unwritten, “rule” or “law” that worked to ensure that those involved in the sport were afforded such protection. In the extract below, Conor describes how he and other young boxers would regularly cross community divides unhindered by paramilitary interference:

I mean we would have travelled...the closest sort of clash point to us would have been (a unionist area of Belfast). And kids from (the unionist area) would walk over here (to a nationalist area) on numerous occasions, and we would walk over there and I would say very rarely did I ever hear of anybody saying something to them, it was accepted. If you were going to the boxing club you were left alone. I don't know why! I don't know what the written rule was... (But) From the smallest to the biggest, they seemed to be left alone (Interview with Conor).

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<sup>82</sup> Whilst conducting research on the sport in Northern Ireland in the mid-1990s, Sugden (1996: 117) also noted that it was “agreed by both sets of paramilitary groups that boxing is left alone.”

His unionist counterpart also describes crossing community boundaries in order to attend his club which was located within a nationalist area, and of feeling protected to a degree whilst doing so:

Obviously there were concerns within the family about going to (a nationalist area of Belfast), but it was kind of like an understanding...That you were kind of safe, that there was an unwritten law that, you know, if you are involved in sport and particularly boxing that you know...you're not untouchable but there wouldn't be any bad will against you (Interview with Peter).

While these participants did not seek to offer explanations for the freedom or even protection afforded to them by militarised groups, from a gendered perspective it seems that the chivalric codes which the sport adhered to fostered respect for those who pursued the sport even among such groups. For bravely facing the dangers inherent within the sport, and for embodying traits of hyper-masculinity often associated with militarised masculinity, boxers were deemed worthy of the status of manhood.<sup>83</sup>

Hence, being identified as boxer during the conflict seemingly brought with it a number of advantages, including respect and status within one's community, protection from paramilitary violence, a reduced expectation that one should join a paramilitary group, and a degree of freedom to move beyond traditional community boundaries. Indeed, it appears that this authentically masculine, physically tough, yet non-militarised identity was perhaps one of the most protective forms of civilian identity which young men within working-class areas could have hoped to aspire. Ironically, the protective capabilities of the sport appear to have been due in large part to its (sportingly) violent nature, and the perceived hyper-masculine identities of those who pursued it. Its protective capabilities, therefore, appear to have been rooted in its violent underpinnings.

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<sup>83</sup> Chivalric codes, which can be traced back to the twelfth century, regulated both warfare and sporting tournaments in medieval times (Moelker and Kümmel 2007). A renewed interest in chivalry in Victorian times inspired the Marquess of Queensbury Rules, which were introduced in 1865, and form the basis of the increased regulation of boxing which still exists today (Murphy and Sheard 2006).

## 6.4 Boxing and Community Relations

A more thorough understanding of the nature of boxing identity and the sport's power to save can also be gained by examining the relations within the sport between those from both sides of the community/religious divide. For the most part, it seems that cooperation and mutual respect pervaded relations, with participants providing some remarkable examples of the extent to which such cooperation was possible. For instance, participants described how "sectarianism never came into boxing" (Interview with Maurice), or how the sport "brought communities together" (Interview with Matthew). While it would be naive to think that conflict dynamics or shades of sectarianism were not present within the sport, it does appear to have been the case that due to its ethos, traditions and open-door recruitment policy, boxing offered one of the best examples of a sport operating on a cross-community basis during the conflict (Sugden and Harvie 1995).

Participants variously exemplified how the sport operated on such a basis. Some spoke about how during the 1970s and 80s, international boxing teams would come to Belfast and how the subsequent boxing shows would alternate between Catholic and Protestant areas. Gavin, who was involved in the organisation of these events, described how they would draw crowds from both sides of the community, uniting people who had previously been kept apart:

I ran a show on a Tuesday night in (a boxing club within a nationalist area of Belfast) and the Thursday night would have been in (a social club within a unionist area of Belfast). And then maybe the next time we would have brought a team in we would have went to (the social club within the unionist area) and then up into the (boxing club within the nationalist area). And that's the way this went. And so supporters were coming in and out for both of these shows. The first one we done in (the social club within the unionist area), I seen men, big men standing crying, it was that long since they met one another, you know. It was something like that you know, it was great... (Interview with Gavin).

Jack, who was also involved in the organisation of such events, describes how paramilitary assurances were necessary before they could proceed, again perhaps

highlighting the extent to which the sport operated within negotiated safe spaces during the period:

We had assurance from people in the areas, different areas, that things would be ok, and vice versa, so that's the way things just went. If we were bringing people into our area we would make sure that we had the ok of everybody there and vice versa, they would do exactly the same. But it was a scary time because you had to be responsible for all the kids. But anyway, that was it, it went like that... (Interview with Jack).

Other participants had memories of participating in these events in their youth, often recalling them with fondness:

I remember in the 70s, Ireland fought East Germany and we (Ireland) fought them up the (a road within a unionist area of Belfast). In the late 70s/early 80s, it would have been all during the time of the Shankill Butchers (a notorious loyalist murder gang) and all this happening. And we got brought up and they treated us like kings, just because it was boxing. Ah...walked in, full lot, Soldier's Song (Irish national anthem) played, tricolour (Irish flag) brought in...And we were sort of looked upon as kings... (Interview with Conor).

That such events could take place within some of the most troubled parts of Belfast during some of the darkest days of the conflict seems quite remarkable. As Sugden and Harvie (1995) note, while many other sports went into decline during this period as those involved were not prepared to travel outside their immediate areas, amateur boxing persisted. This seems at least partly due to the esteem with which those involved in the sport were held by those on both sides of the community. Such was the esteem within which one of the aforementioned organisers (Gavin) was held, he even received an invitation to train both loyalist and republican prisoners in the Maze Prison in the early 1980's. During one such visit, he recalled a rather remarkable encounter with loyalist prisoners who asked about the progress of their republican counterparts:

Then when I was going in, if I was in with the UVF<sup>84</sup>, the UDA, that's who I was in with, and they would have said to me "Gavin, how are the boys getting on?" And what they meant then was how was the 'RA (PIRA) getting on? And I said, "well I'm having problems getting some equipment in for them, bags, gloves and things like that." "Ah you're joking! Take our stuff down! We'll lend them our gear." And then "as long as it's in here Gavin when you're back on Thursday", you know this type of stuff. So, there they were shooting one another outside, and whenever I was there with them they were lending their stuff, and this was the way it was going between both of them. It's unbelievable (Interview with Gavin).

From a gendered perspective, these examples appear to illustrate that those involved in the sport had a certain level of respect for each other as men. Regardless of community background, it seems they were willing to honour the chivalric codes or values associated with boxing even as members of paramilitary groups; such codes being rooted in the history of the regulation of both sport and warfare (Moelker and Kümmel 2007).<sup>85</sup> Hence, while loyalist prisoners may have viewed their republican counterparts as their enemies, and would not have had any hesitation in using violence against them particularly in light of their status as conflict participants, it seems that they nevertheless recognised their willingness to be imprisoned for their political beliefs and their engagement with a sport associated with hyper-masculinity. In this respect, therefore, they too had proven themselves as men and deserved respect according to chivalric values.

Furthermore, while the above extracts may perhaps contain some of the more extreme examples of cooperation between those on both sides of the community, an overwhelming majority of participants provided examples of the sport's capacity to build "bridges" or "transcend politics" (Interview with Peter; Interview with

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<sup>84</sup> The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) are a loyalist paramilitary group formed in 1966 in response to an increase in Irish nationalism in Northern Ireland (BBC News 2011).

<sup>85</sup> In addition to the development of the Marquess of Queensbury Rules, it is argued that a renewed interest in chivalry in the nineteenth century also led to the codification of the laws of war, which culminated in the formation of the First Geneva Convention in 1864 (Rubin 2011).

Matthew). As noted within Chapter 4, the fact that boxing was perceived as a neutral sport and not automatically associated with one tradition or the other appears to have greatly facilitated such a dynamic (Sugden and Harvie 1995). In addition, as noted above, numerous participants felt untethered by community divides on account of their participation in the sport, with one participant expressing the belief that he felt he could go “anywhere” within Belfast even in the midst of conflict (Interview with Daniel). Moreover, it has been noted how a number of clubs had members from both sides of the community during this period, which meant politics was “left at the door” of such clubs (Interview with Ryan).

It was also evident that the inclusive nature of the sport often made a lasting impression on those who participated in it. Numerous participants spoke about how the sport had broadened their outlook, enabled them to meet people and form friendships beyond the confines of their own community, and ultimately to humanise those from the other community. It is perhaps the case that their endeavours within a physically tough sport gave those from both communities something with which they could both identify, perhaps enabling them to see the others both in terms of their masculinity and their humanity in a way that did not compromise their own sense of masculine identity.

In the extracts that follow the participants reveal the role the sport played in terms of enabling them to mix with and, indeed, humanise those from the other community. For Matthew, the sport helped him to see that those from the Protestant community were “just like” him:

So the boxing brought me...you know, you heard all these things about Protestants, and you had great fear of them, and suspicions, and we thought they were two headed monsters. But through the boxing, and I think this was why I never joined any paramilitaries or was never so bitter or whatever because I mingled with Protestants through the boxing and they were just like me, just ordinary kids, lovely (Interview with Matthew).

Similarly, in the extract below, John describes making the decision to join a boxing club in a nationalist area having been involved in the sport for a number of years

previously. It appears that his “recognition” of those from the Catholic community had been changed as a result of his participation in the sport:

So I thought I’d go down and try the (Belfast based boxing club) out, which was in (a nationalist area of Belfast). So a boy from (a unionist area) was going down to (a nationalist area). But you see by that point, the amount of people that I had known through boxing between going on trips, going away to spar and this, that, and the other, it just...my recognition had completely changed (Interview with John).

As noted within Chapter 2, Anderson (2007) has written on the concept of inclusive masculinity, i.e., a form of masculinity that is predicated on the social inclusion of those normally marginalised by the prevailing norms of hegemonic masculinity. Within a culture of inclusive masculinity, Anderson (2011) argues that men are permitted to support each other emotionally, during for example, times of crisis or loss, and are free from having to continually prove their heterosexuality. Moreover, within such cultures it is argued that multiple masculinities may exist without one form necessarily having hegemony.

Within this context, it seems that those involved in the sport both experienced and embraced many of qualities associated with inclusive masculinity as defined by Anderson. Certainly, they were often inclusive towards those from the other community at a time when conflict dynamics would have perhaps suggested otherwise. Such data, therefore, again support the view that those involved in the sport embraced a wide range of masculine behaviours beyond those narrowly associated with traditional or hyper forms of masculine identity.

Numerous participants also described the close friendships they had formed as a result of their involvement in the sport, friendships that often crossed community divides. It was clear these friendships were often deeply held and valued. On two separate occasions participants used the term “friends for life” when describing the nature of these relationships (Interview with Peter; Interview with George), something which was said to be: “testament to the role that sport can play in terms of building bridges between communities” (Interview with Peter).

As Messner (1992) notes, men who have worked, fought, or played together, whether within sports or other areas of life, often form deep and lasting friendships. The depth of friendships formed by those within the sport was also revealed by the fact that several participants referred to the boxing community as a “family” (Interview with Matthew; Interview with Jason; Interview with Maurice). Such sentiments seemed to suggest that all those involved in the sport were part of that family, regardless of community background or political aspiration. Male friendship, as part of the performance of masculinity (Migliaccio 2009), was not derailed or made impossible by community background. Masculine bonds, therefore, proved stronger than community division.

For Daniel, those involved in boxing were “forerunners” who were bridging divides and “knocking down all the barriers” even in the midst of conflict. Similarly, Gavin described how he was giving a presentation on his work within boxing at a function attended by a number of politicians. After he had presented, he was approached by a prominent politician from the unionist/loyalist community who commended him on the inclusive nature of this work. The politician in question reportedly said that those within the political class were “well behind” him in terms of how he approached his work, and argued that they “should have been doing” work of this nature years before.

However, while boxing may have been something of a forerunner in terms of providing an example of how genuine cross-community engagement and cooperation may work within the higher echelons of politics, it is important to remember that boxing was not primarily political in nature, nor did it claim to have a formal community relations agenda (Sugden and Harvie 1995). In fact, it is perhaps the case that such an agenda would have proven counterproductive, a view which appears to have been shared by most of the bodies governing sport in Northern Ireland during the period (Sugden and Harvie 1995). It also appears to be a view shared by at least some of those who participated in the sport itself (Interview with Conor).

Notwithstanding the friendships, shared values and solidarity which undoubtedly existed within the sport even in the midst of conflict, I believe it is necessary to add a note of caution. There were participants, for example, who spoke about individuals

who had pursued the sport and had subsequently become involved in paramilitary activity. Others spoke about how on rare occasions they had experienced sectarianism or felt threatened in certain situations. On account of this, it would be naïve to paint a picture of a sport entirely insulated from conflict dynamics, or to suggest that it could be, given the structural nature of sectarianism. Boxing in this context, therefore, cannot simply be described as a “Cinderella” story (Interview with Andrew).

As Sugden and Bairner (1993: 107) argue, “sport is not and never can be a panacea for social cleavages.” While those involved with boxing in this context may have been bridging divides and breaking down barriers, it appears they were doing so in a way that affirmed their own masculine identities and shared masculine values. They were not, however, championing wider social change, and the extent to which they influenced political belief or social values outside of boxing is questionable (Sugden and Harvey 1995). The collaborative nature of their relationships appears to have been largely confined to the highly masculinised boxing environment; their shared chivalric values facilitating cooperation and mutual respect in a manner that would have proven difficult to replicate outside this space.

For Sugden and Harvie (1995), boxing in this context can be considered apolitical in the sense that those from both communities were prepared to suspend their beliefs whilst within the confines of the sport, their shared masculine values and chivalric principles facilitating such a suspension. Nevertheless, in a context within which most other sports were deeply implicated in perpetuating community division, boxing appears to have remained largely faithful to Corinthian principles which sought to ensure the separation of sport and politics (Harvie and Sugden 1995).

## **6.5 Boxing in the Post-Agreement Era**

As noted within Chapter 2, ways of “doing male” are continually changing and are shaped not just by the experience of war, but also by the shifting political, social and economic conditions in its aftermath (Hamber 2007: 380). Within such contexts it is argued that men, already traumatised by conflict (Porter 2013), often experience a loss of identity as they struggle to fulfil their socially ascribed roles such as those of providers and protectors (Vess et al. 2013). It is argued that the emotional stress resulting from such a loss can lead to a cycle of violence against both the self and

others (Vess et al. 2013), as men feel their masculinities are “collapsing” under the strain of gendered expectations they cannot meet (Dolan 2002: 57).

While it is important not to equate changes in men’s opportunities and experiences with a crisis in masculinity (Whitehead and Barrett 2001: 9), in the context of Northern Ireland it does appear to be the case that the changes associated with the transition from conflict to relative peace have presented men, and particularly young men, with significant challenges (Hamber and Gallagher 2014). Even those born after the signing of the 1998 peace agreement are faced with the challenges associated with the legacy of conflict. For example, youth unemployment in Northern Ireland typically exceeds the UK average by a number of percentage points (Morrow et al. 2016). Moreover, levels of deprivation and financial hardship continue to be more extensive in Northern Ireland than in the UK as a whole (Poverty and Social Exclusion 2013), and alienation, high levels of poverty, and low levels of educational attainment mean that aspirations among young people are alarmingly low (Morrow et al. 2016).

Some young men from disadvantaged communities also live with the very real threat of punishment and intimidation from paramilitary groups (Harland and McCready 2014). Fear and the experience of violence, therefore, continue to be integral to the formation of male identities in working-class areas (Harland 2011), and young men from disadvantaged communities continue to find it difficult to achieve normative forms of masculinity through traditional anchors of employment (Ashe and Harland 2014). Paramilitary membership has been, and continues to be, an attractive option for young men from such communities (Harland, 2011; Morrow et al. 2016) as they attempt to overcome feelings of marginalisation, vulnerability and exclusion (Harland and McCready 2014). Moreover, as has also been noted in Chapter 4, growing rates of self-harm, suicide and drug related deaths have been identified in the post-agreement period (Hamber 2015; NISRA 2019),<sup>86</sup> and thus it seems that many young men (and particularly those from working-class communities), are

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<sup>86</sup> It is now the case that more people have taken their own lives in Northern Ireland since the signing of the 1998 peace agreement than were killed during the Troubles (McDonald 2018). The overwhelming majority of those to do so were men (NISRA 2017). Moreover, in 2015, rates of suicide in the most deprived areas were three times higher than in the least deprived (Toreny 2016).

struggling with addiction, mental health problems, and low self-esteem (Hamber 2015).

It is within this context, then, that a number of participants felt that boxing had a continued role to play in terms of positively intervening in the lives of young people within their communities. Issues around mental health and drug abuse appear to have been of particular concern to participants in the post-agreement period. Jason, for instance, spoke about how the decision to form a boxing club within his locality was taken after a number of young men in the area had taken their own lives, and it was felt that something needed to be done to try to reach those at risk. A number of clubs were also actively involved in raising awareness of mental health issues, with one club raising funds for a local mental health charity on an ongoing basis while another was involved in an annual cross-community event called Boxing for Well Being. In general, it seemed that quite a number of clubs were becoming increasingly aware of the need to proactively highlight such issues within their communities.

Numerous participants also expressed concern about the perceived increased prevalence of drugs within their communities. Ryan, in particular, was gravely concerned about this issue and expressed a certain amount of regret that paramilitaries were no longer able to control the drugs trade in the way they had during the conflict. For him, boxing, therefore, had an important role to play in terms of keeping young people away from drugs by giving them an “interest” and a “goal.”

Other participants spoke about how they would try to ensure that those under their supervisor avoided alcohol, or at least consumed it in moderation. The point was made that to be competitive within the sport, one had to be really disciplined and do everything possible to remain at one’s physical peak. Hence, it seems that the draw of sporting success may be enough to dissuade some aspiring boxers to avoid drugs, alcohol, or anything else which may compromise their optimal physical fitness. In this respect, therefore, the sport may have a certain amount of leverage to influence the behaviour of young people in a way that other interventions may not. It is perhaps the case that those who pursue the sport feel that their masculine status as boxers can outweigh accusations that they are violating norms often associated with youth culture, the consumption of drugs and alcohol serving only to distract them

from their goal of gaining a potent masculine identity through their pursuit of boxing.

A number of participants also felt that the sport had a continued and important social role to play in terms of keeping young people off the streets, thereby reducing anti-social behaviour and the costs associated with it. The view was expressed that putting money into boxing was a very cost-effective way to achieve such a goal (Interview with Emily; Interview with Ryan). Indeed, perhaps in recognition of such a view, it appears that the number of boxing clubs has actually increased in the post-agreement era. Whilst on a road in west Belfast, for example, I was informed by Jack that there were currently fifteen boxing clubs located within a fifteen-minute radius of our location, and another ten located within other areas of Belfast. Several new boxing clubs have also been established in unionist communities within the greater Derry area in last number of years. It seems however that virtually all boxing clubs remain located with working-class areas and that they remain accessible in monetary terms, with weekly charges of between two and five pounds per person being quoted by participants.

Thus, in communities struggling to deal with the legacy of conflict, continued social disadvantage, and high levels of self-harm, it seems that the sport has a continued role to play in terms of helping young people to navigate the challenges associated with growing up in such environments. Within communities where masculinities continue to be formed against a backdrop of violence or potential violence, and where normative forms of masculinity through meaningful employment prove difficult to achieve, the sport may offer young men a degree of status and a sense of security in their masculine identities which may otherwise prove difficult to attain.

## **6.6 Boxing Identity as Distinctive, Corporal and Class-Based**

In an attempt to further understand the dynamics within boxing and how they contributed to the salvation of participants and collaboration among those on both sides of the community/religious divide, I believe it is necessary to examine, in detail, boxing identity itself. In short, I want to explore how the nature of boxing identity in this context facilitated dynamics that one would not expect to find within a hyper-masculine environment in the midst of violent conflict. In order to do so, I

explore boxing identity in relation to its distinctive, corporal and class-based (masculine) nature.

By referring to boxing identity as distinctive, I suggest that it was to some extent set apart from other forms of identity (such as community/religious identity), and that it was considered a relatively complete form of identity in itself. During conversations with participants, it seemed that such an identity was to a certain extent free from classification along sectarian lines; that it could, to a certain extent, transcend one's community/religious identity. Andrew, for example, spoke about how he was unaware in his youth of the community/religious identities of those he was boxing with, and instead simply viewed them as "boxers." Others reported similar views and insisted that community/religious identity (or the potential for sectarianism attached to it) became irrelevant on entering the boxing gym.

Furthermore, when participants referred to a number of sectarian incidents which were alleged to have taken place within the sport in recent years, it was suggested that they could not have members of any boxing club. It was stressed that they were neither representative of the sport nor "boxing people" (Interview with Andrew). For such participants, it seemed important to emphasise that genuine "boxing people" would never participant in or condone behaviour that insulted the community identity of another. By referring to alleged sectarian incidents in this manner, it seems that participants were once again highlighting the extent to which they saw boxing identity as a distinctive form of identity, unbound and untainted by religious/community divisions.

Its physically demanding and essentially violent nature also appears to be critically important in terms of defining the nature of boxing identity and its relationship to dynamics present within the sport. As Connell (2005) notes, true masculinity is almost always thought to be inherent within, and to proceed from, the male body. Furthermore, as Woodward (2007: 64) argues, boxing is "a sport distinctly marked by corporality"; within the sport the body is central and the boxer is totally identified with his body. Displays of masculinity, therefore, are both visible and visual, and pain, as experienced through the body, is an inescapable part of the boxer's experience (Woodward 2007).

Certainly, it seems that the corporal nature of the sport and the shared experience of pain was something of a common denominator among participants. Once in the ring, community/religious identity counted for very little. Furthermore, the aggressive nature of relations ceased once the fight had ended, and any residual animosity was expected to be put to one side. Sporting norms, therefore, as defined by the chivalric codes associated with boxing, were deemed more significant than community/religious (or even personal) animosities, as described in the extract below:

The thing about it was, we were always brought up, whether Catholic or Protestant, white or black, once the bell rang he was just going to try to hit you. And after the bell rang for the last time you had to put your arm around him and shake hands, give him a hug, and forget about everything that had happened in the last nine minutes (Interview with Conor).

In a similar manner, Matthew describes the “juxtaposition” between competitors assaulting each other during a fight and then hugging each other once the fight is over, suggesting that the physical nature of the sport served to cultivate mutual respect and ultimately break down (community/religious) “barriers”:

But then when you got in the ring...there’s nothing like...you see it constantly, two guys punching the head clean out of each other and by the end of it they’re hugging each other...I mean the juxtaposition there. And that’s what happened...you know you got in and sparred with these guys and you built up a bond and you built up a respect, a mutual respect and...the barriers came down (Interview with Matthew).

As noted above, boxing in Northern Ireland is a sport very much rooted within working-class communities (Sugden and Harvie 1995). In the extract which follows, Harry argues that “being able to handle yourself as a male” is an important way of defining masculinity within such communities. If this is indeed the case, then those involved in boxing seem well placed to meet this challenge. Moreover, an ability to define oneself in such a manner is likely to take on a heightened importance within working-class communities in the relative absence of other possibilities; certainly more so than within middle-class communities where the possibilities for masculine

validation are more numerous. His input, therefore, is revealing in terms of the relationship between boxing and working-class masculinity in this context:

Boxing is very much a working-class sport. You know being able to handle yourself as a male coming from a working-class background is a way of defining your masculinity. And in many ways it's where a lot of them (working-class males) get status from within the community (Interview with Harry).

During the conflict it appears to have been the case that the type of masculinity embodied by boxers, based upon the inflicting and suffering of violence (albeit within highly controlled environments), was valued within working-class communities on both sides of the community divide. Harry elaborates on this by arguing that such communities “understood what it was to be a man”, which thus enabled boxers to be respected beyond the confines of their own community. In the following extract, he argues that the former Irish boxer, Barry McGuigan, was a prime example of this:<sup>87</sup>

So, these working-class communities, even though they were at one another in a war, they understood what it was to be a man, what it took to get into a ring. The courage and all that you know. So you can see that sort of coming together a bit in (Barry) McGuigan. Like during the worst years of the Troubles, McGuigan was able to unite people from the Shankill (Road) and the Falls (Road),<sup>88</sup> you know it was an amazing achievement (Interview with Harry).

The esteem within which boxers were held by those on both sides of the community divide may also be partly explained by Belfast's rich tradition of “hard” men (Feldman 1991: 52). In pre-conflict times hard men were those who worked in the shipyards, mills and factories (Sugden and Harvie 1995), and who engaged in bare-knuckled street fights and gained notoriety for doing so (Feldman 1991). Fights between hard men featured punches, but not kicks or head-butts and certainly not

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<sup>87</sup> Barry McGuigan was the 1985 world featherweight champion (McGuigan 2011). A Catholic from a town in County Monaghan just south of the border with Northern Ireland, he chose to fight professionally for British rather than Irish titles (Sugden and Harvie 1995).

<sup>88</sup> The Shankill Road is a staunchly unionist/loyalist area of Belfast, while the Falls Road is staunchly nationalist/republican.

weapons (Sugden and Harvie 1995). While the hard man's day may have dawned with the coming of conflict, Feldman (1991) argues that the prominence of both the hard man and the gun man demonstrated a tendency within working-class culture to personify collective violence through icons of specialists in the use of force. Such a cultural tendency may, therefore, help to explain why boxers, as visible personifications of the specialist use of force, appeared to gain some degree of cross-community acceptance.

Hence, it seems that the authenticity of their masculine identities, which appears to have been agreed upon on both sides of the community divide, enabled boxers (and those involved with boxing) to at least partially transcend community differences even in the midst of conflict. Such transcendence, however, was possible because of, rather than in spite of, their rootedness within working-class communities. Perhaps during this time and in these spaces, boxing identities were not only authentically working-class and masculine, but also authentically protective and redemptive.

### **6.7 Boxing as a Peacebuilding Intervention**

Having examined boxing identity and the role that boxing played (and continues to play) in the lives of participants, I argue that within this context boxing may be viewed as an informal and culturally appropriate peacebuilding intervention. By this I mean that boxing created safe spaces for men for the collective enhancement of masculinities whilst also facilitating contact and respect for those on the other side of the community/religious divide. Moreover, in reducing the expectations upon young men to prove their masculinities through paramilitary membership, it seems that the sport managed to address young men's culturally sanctioned gendered interests and identities whilst steering them away from a path of political violence.

I have noted above how boxing masculinities share many of the same characteristics which are often associated with military/militarised masculinities. However, the peculiarity of boxing within this context is that it utilised a form of masculinity closely associated with militarised masculinity in order to direct young men away from conflict participation, harnessing it for peace rather than for war. Being involved in the sport provided men with an alternative to the perpetration of paramilitary violence in a way that did not compromise their masculine identities.

Boxers could be both alpha males and civilian men, and, indeed, could be celebrated for being so.

They were not, after all, transgressing gender codes or shrinking their responsibilities towards their communities. On the contrary, they were following gender roles that were (outwardly at least) closely aligned with the ideals of militarised masculinity. They were also, at significant personal cost, putting their bodies on the line in order to bring pride to their communities. By doing so, it seems that boxers could enjoy many of the benefits often associated with militarised masculinity, such as community visibility and social status, without actually having to engage in political violence.

A number of scholars have suggested that interventions to promote non-(socially) violent masculinities must take existing gender dynamics into account (see Large 1997; Dolan 2002; Lwambo 2013). Within this context, it seems that boxing has largely succeeded in doing so. While few may advocate for utilising the sport in order to address male violence, it does appear that this form of intervention was, and continues to be, highly compatible with prevailing gender dynamics within working-class communities. While it was a form of intervention that disciplined and even controlled the masculinities of young men, it did not seek to tame them or render them in any way weak or vulnerable in the eyes of others.

In this sense, therefore, while boxing may not have challenged masculinity's enduring association with violence (in a sporting sense), it does appear to have at least proven effective in providing viable civilian alternatives to the militarised forms of masculinities which were highly visible within communities disproportionately affected by social deprivation and conflict violence. In doing so, I argue that it contributed to building peace amongst those considered specialists in the art of the controlled infliction of bodily violence.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined how Northern Ireland's protracted conflict impacted upon the lives and identities of some civilian men involved in a popular Irish sport, namely that of boxing. It has drawn attention to the ways in which the intersecting identities of participants meant that they were at increased risk of both suffering and,

indeed, perpetrating political violence. In light of this it has highlighted how participants felt that the sport had saved them from paramilitary involvement or criminality, and has examined the underlying dynamics within the sport which may have made such salvation possible. The modelling of masculinities by boxing coaches, the masculinised sanctuary to be found within boxing clubs, and the (masculine) status afforded to those involved in the sport all appear to have contributed to the sport's ability to save, and to ensure that boxers could be both civilian men and alpha males.

The chapter has also explored the collaborative nature of relations within the sport and its ability to at least partially transcend community/religious divides, ensuring that those within the sport felt safe and accepted even in the midst of conflict. It has attempted to understand the seemingly distinctive, transcendent and corporal nature of boxing identity as rooted within working-class masculinity; an identity which appears to have been one of the most protective forms of civilian identity to which young men within working-class areas could have hoped to aspire during the conflict period. Finally, it has argued that boxing within this context may be viewed as a peacebuilding intervention, one that took account of existing gender dynamics within working-class communities while also providing alternatives to the militarised forms of masculine identity present within such communities during the period.

In the chapter which follows, I examine the key themes which emerged from the data collected within the Occupied Territories, and explore how ongoing conflict and military occupation have impacted upon the lives and identities of civilian men within this context.

## Chapter 7: Civilian Masculinities, Occupation and Conflict

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the key themes which emerged from the data collected within the Occupied Territories. It examines how protracted conflict and military occupation have impacted upon the lives and identities of civilian men. Specifically, it primarily explores the lives and identities of Palestinian university students as they pursue their studies and continue with their lives despite the challenges associated with their socio-political environment.<sup>89</sup> Given the paucity of scholarship on both gender and occupation, and on the conflict-related experiences of civilian men (Foster 2011; de Matos and Ward 2012), the data presented here aim to contribute to such scholarship and to further our knowledge at the intersection of these two areas of inquiry. While the data which emerged from interactions with men and women in this context is shaped in part by the specificities of this context, it is argued that they can also offer insights on the conflict-related experiences of civilian men more broadly.

The chapter draws attention to the extent to which those in the Occupied Territories are vulnerable to the effects of conflict-related violence. It explores the meaning which participants attached to their civilian status, and the limits of its utility. It examines the ways in which the occupation has challenged or undermined the masculinities of civilian men, with particular reference to the checkpoint regime. The chapter also investigates the extent to which masculinities have been redefined in light of the realities of conflict and occupation.

I show, for example, how caution and vigilance have come to be seen as valuable masculine traits given the perpetual state of uncertainty which exists within this context. I also suggest that participants often regarded the masculinities of Israeli soldiers to be illegitimate rather than expressions of authentic manhood. Finally, I

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<sup>89</sup> By way of reminder, twenty Palestinian university students/recent graduates were interviewed for this research, while two groups of six students participated in the focus groups. Of those interviewed, thirteen were male and seven were female, while the focus groups consisted of four males and two females and six males respectively. All were in their late teens or early twenties at the time of interview. Two members of staff at Palestinian universities were also interviewed, as was a Palestinian lawyer/activist and a teacher at a Palestinian secondary school, all of whom were male. In addition, an interview was conducted with a female member of staff at an Israeli human rights organisation, and with three female volunteers from the Israeli human rights organisation MachsomWatch. As is the case throughout, the names given to participants are pseudonyms.

discuss how the participants negotiated the occupation and continued to find ways in which to express their masculinities, by utilising various forms of knowledge, pooling economic resources, and by steadfastly persisting in the face of continued violence and insecurity.

## **7.2 Violence and Vulnerability in the Occupied Territories**

As noted in Chapter 4, armed struggle has often been regarded as a way in which Palestinian men could regain their manhood following decades of dispossession and occupation (Amireh 2003). However, the men who participated in this study did not define their masculinities in relation to armed violence. By contrast, to the best of my knowledge, all were civilian and had remained so throughout their lives. They could thus speak authoritatively about their civilian experiences of conflict and occupation, and offer insight into the often overlooked conflict-related experiences of civilian men.

In order to understand their experiences, however, it is necessary to draw attention to the context within which the participants lived their lives. As outlined in Chapter 4, the last number of decades has seen significant bloodshed within Israel-Palestine, with 7,929 deaths recorded between 1989 and 2018 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2019). While the majority of such deaths occurred within Gaza, a significant proportion also occurred within either Jerusalem or the West Bank, i.e. the areas within which all of the Palestinian participants resided. Moreover, while many of these deaths can be attributed to the violence associated with the second intifada (Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2019), Palestinians in particular continue to lose their lives within these areas on a relatively regular basis, with sixty Palestinians (fifty-eight of whom were civilian) losing their lives in the West Bank between late 2017 and August 2019 (UNOCHA 2019b).

While all those living within the Occupied Territories have suffered as a result of the conflict, it seems that men have often been its primary victims. For example, as noted in Chapter 5, between September 2000 and July 2007 (which encompasses the years of the second intifada) 4,228 Palestinian lost their lives as a result of the conflict, ninety-four per cent of whom were male (UNOCHA 2007).<sup>90</sup> In more

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<sup>90</sup> Of all those killed by the Israeli Security Forces during this period, fifty-nine per cent were thought to be civilian (UNOCHA 2007).

recent years, men have continued to account for the majority of those who have died, with 3,706 of the 5,512 Palestinians who have lost their lives as a result of the conflict between January 2008 and August 2019 being men (UNOCHA 2019b). Such figures again highlight the extent to which conflict is a deeply gendered experience, and also how men in this context may struggle to fulfil their roles as providers and protectors (Gokani et al. 2015), a point which is further discussed below.

Those fortunate enough to avoid being subjected to lethal violence have, however, often suffered in a variety of other ways. As noted within Chapter 5, thousands of Palestinians have suffered physical injuries in recent decades (Batniji et al. 2009; UNOCHA 2019b), while the conflict has also had a significant impact upon their mental health (Dimitry 2011; Canetti et al. 2010). A third of all Palestinian men are also said to have been in Israel detention at one point or another since 1967 (Jabr 2015). In addition, a recent IMAGES study conducted across the Occupied Territories found that sixty-five per cent of male participants and fifty-five per cent of female participants had experienced at least one specific form of occupation-related violence in the last five years, with men more likely to report having been injured, detained, or harassed by soldiers or settlers (El Feki et al. 2017). Despite this, however, it seems that Palestinian men are rarely seen as the victims of Israeli aggression (Mikadashim 2014).

Beyond the impact of violence, the economic situation in the Occupied Territories remains precarious. In 2014, for example, unemployment across the territories stood at twenty-seven per cent (International Labour Organization 2015). In East Jerusalem, seventy-five per cent of Palestinian residents were living below the poverty line (Association for Civil Rights in Israel 2015), while in the West Bank twenty-one per cent of all residents required some form of humanitarian assistance (UNCTAD 2016). In 2016, thirty-three per cent of all those living within the Occupied Territories were judged to be food insecure, with a further thirty-three per cent said to be either marginally insecure or vulnerable to insecurity (UNCTAD 2016). Hence, beyond their vulnerability to violence, those within the Occupied Territories also remain vulnerable to poverty and unemployment.

### **7.2.1 Violence and Vulnerability at Checkpoints**

As a result of the conflict and occupation, therefore, Palestinians have in various ways been exposed to decades of “profound insecurity and violence” (UNDP 2010: 20). In particular, when participants spoke about their conflict-related experiences, it became apparent that military checkpoints were sites at which they often felt particularly vulnerable and insecure. Perhaps this is not surprising given that they are sites at which the threat of violence remains ever present, and where the order of violence between the soldier and the civilian, the occupier and the occupied, the subjugator and the subjugated, is acted out (Hammami 2015).

Israel has systematically operated a policy of closure and siege within the Occupied Territories since the early 1990s (Mansbach 2009). Various types of obstructions including manned checkpoints, roadblocks, metal gates, and earth mounds pave the territories, and together with the separation barrier they have become one of the most prominent technologies of the occupation (Kotef and Amir 2014). As suggested within Chapter 4, not only do checkpoints separate Palestinians from Israelis, but as they are often located within Palestinian areas, they also frequently separate Palestinians from each other (Korsten 2011). Since their emergence almost three decades ago, checkpoints have thus created a myriad of unconnected communities and placed a dense a grid of limitations upon the movement of Palestinians (Hammami 2006; Kotef and Amir 2014).

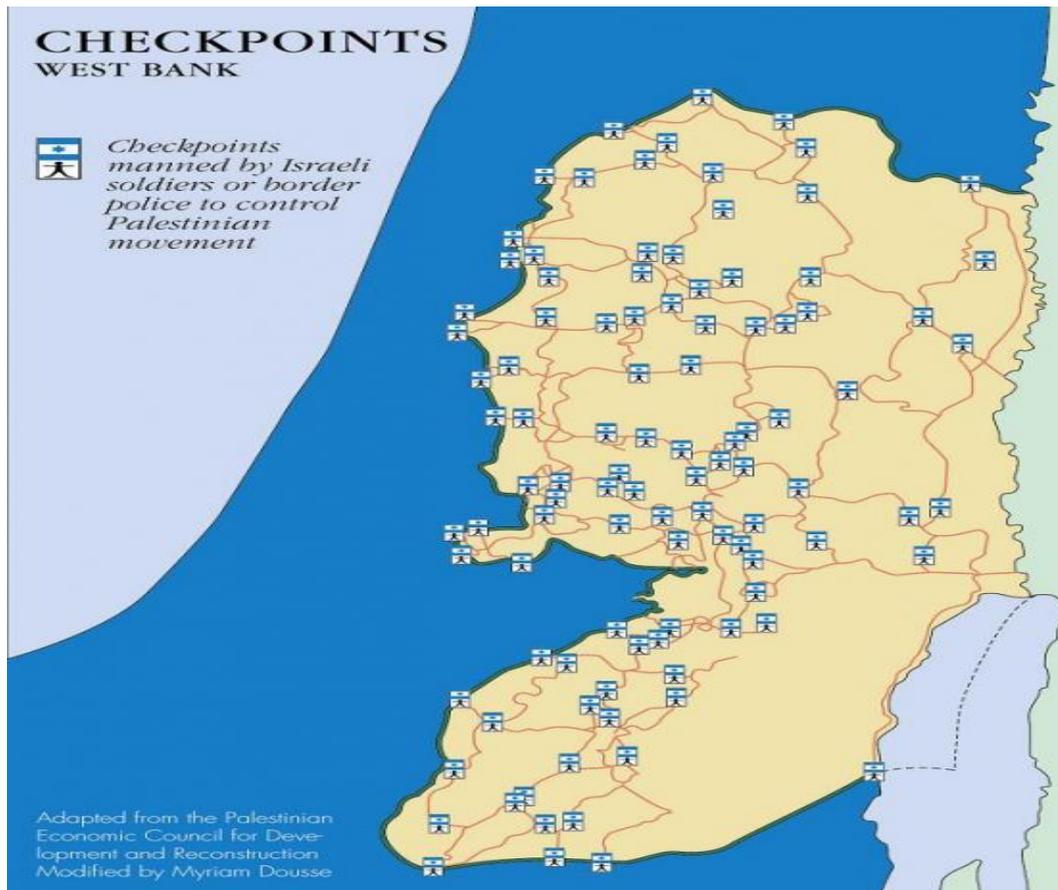


Figure 6: Manned Checkpoints in the West Bank (Palestinian Portal 2018)

While Israeli policy justifies the existence of such sites based on the assumption that every Palestinian is a potential security threat (Korsten 2011), participants frequently emphasised the extent to which such sites only served to detract from their sense of security and physical safety. In the extract which follows, for example, Anis, a Palestinian university student,<sup>91</sup> describes how the suspicions of soldiers can often result in lethal force being used against Palestinians at these sites, a point which was also made by a number of other participants:

If they (the soldiers) feel anything that's a threat to them they're gonna shoot...even if there is a one per cent chance that you might do anything, they'll still shoot you. I mean you see people getting shot up for no reason (Interview with Anis).

<sup>91</sup> Unless stated otherwise, the participants cited within this chapter were Palestinian students or recent graduates at the time of interview.

As Anis suggests, there seemed to be a sense that soldiers often acted with impunity and were largely unconcerned about having to justify their actions. Such a dynamic was also noted in January 2017, when the United Nations human rights spokesperson, Ravina Shamdasani, commented on the “chronic culture of impunity” which existed within the Israeli security forces with regard to the killing of Palestinians (Al-Haq 2018). Similarly, in the following extract, Hasan expresses the view that soldiers often felt they did not really “need a reason” to justify their use of potentially lethal force at these sites:

(...) at the end of the day they don't really need a reason because they just throw a f\*\*\*ing knife there, and then they shoot you and say that you tried to stab them....they don't need a f\*\*\*ing reason (Interview with Hasan).

While it became apparent that checkpoints threatened the security of all Palestinians living within the Occupied Territories, a number of participants opined that it was potentially more dangerous for men to cross such sites than it was for women, an opinion which has also been expressed by Korsten (2011). It seems that participants were of the view that this was due to the perception that men were more likely to pose a risk to the Israeli security forces at such sites, which led to “the pressure being extra on men” (Focus Group 2). Hence, as men were considered to be the likely perpetrators of violence against Israeli forces, this in turn resulted in them being the primary victims of violence at the hands of such forces. This dynamic is succinctly captured in the following extract, within which Fatima describes the perceived threats posed by men, as well as the dangers faced by them at such sites:

Let me speak about men here. Every time he goes through the checkpoint, he is a suspect. Even if there is nothing, they will search him, they will stop him, ask him a few questions, and sometimes if they are in the mood, they may shoot...so it's really dangerous” (Interview with Fatima).

### 7.2.2 Unsafe Spaces

While checkpoints appear to be sites which pose a particularly acute threat to the safety and security of Palestinians (not least to Palestinian men), many participants did not feel particularly safe anywhere in the Occupied Territories.<sup>92</sup> Military incursions within both public and private space, such as the neighbourhood, the university campus and the family home, have it seems become facts of life. At one of the campuses where a number of the participants studied, there were said to have been had been more than thirty incursions by the Israeli military during the 2014/2015 academic year (Interview with Habib).<sup>93</sup> Such incursions were ongoing at the time of my fieldwork (September-November 2016), and several participants recalled the most recent incursion which had taken place several weeks prior to my first visit to the campus. This incursion apparently resulted in a number of students being injured and extensive damage to the campus. The extracts below, therefore, capture something of the insecurity associated with the aforementioned spaces:

We are not safe at our houses, they come anytime, anyplace. Our government doesn't defend us or can't do anything to help us, so we are not safe...It's not even safe to come to the university (Interview with Sayed).

At any time, from your bedroom or your classroom they can come and take you whenever they want (Interview with Emad).

It seems that a lack of safe space had repercussions in terms of participants feeling that they had to remain in a state of constant vigilance, lest their negligence should compromise their safety. Hisham, for instance, spoke of how Palestinians were all “subjects of suspicion” in the eyes of those responsible for Israeli security and of how young Palestinians in particular had to live with the “constant fear” of the consequences of suspicions (Focus Group 1). His colleague, Yezid, described how it was imperative not to carry any sharp objects such as knives, scissors, screwdrivers or even rulers, as being found with such items could put one at risk of suffering violence or arrest (Focus Group 1; Interview with Anis).

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<sup>92</sup> Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009) has also noted how Palestinians struggle to find protected and insulated spaces, and as a result often feel permanently insecure.

<sup>93</sup> Member of staff at a Palestinian university.

The lengths to which Palestinian go to avoid carrying such items was illustrated by two anecdotes I heard during my time in the Occupied Territories. In the first, Yasser, a father and former member of staff at a Palestinian university, explained how he would check his daughters' schoolbags before they left for school to ensure they were not carrying broken rulers or anything else that could be considered threatening (Field Notes, 25th October '16). In the second, Juliette, a fellow researcher, described hiking with Palestinians and other internationals through the West Bank countryside. When they stopped for lunch, an international hiker asked if anyone had a knife with which to open to an avocado. However, despite the fact that the group was apparently comprised of dozens of Palestinians, none were carrying knives (Field Notes, 25<sup>th</sup> October '16). While the group found humour in the situation, it illustrates the vigilance Palestinians deem necessary to try to ensure their safety within spaces which they consider to be far from secure. In this context, therefore, weapons were not viewed as protective, but as items which the security forces could use in order to justify the use of violence against those found to possess them.

### **7.2.3 Protecting One's Provision/Contribution**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the statistics cited above, a number of participants expressed the view that men in the Occupied Territories were particularly vulnerable to conflict-related violence, not only at security checkpoints but also more generally. As well as being viewed as more dangerous, participants opined that men were more prominent within public spaces (Interview with Raed), and hence had to "deal" a lot more with the occupation (Interview with Habib). Raed was also of the view that, as the primary providers within Palestinian society, Israeli forces know that if they cripple men's ability to provide, it will have a significant effect on their families. By his logic, employing violence against men was the most efficient way to suppress Palestinian society at large, which to a significant extent remains highly traditional, patriarchal, and characterised by the primacy of male roles within both the family and society (Korsten 2011; El Feki et al. 2017).

As noted previously, scholars have reported that the economic challenges associated with conflict and occupation have impacted upon how masculinities are constructed within the Occupied Territories (McDonald 2010; Gokani et al. 2015). The ability to

provide and protect are said to be key masculine responsibilities within this context (Johnson and Kuttab 2001; Amireh 2003), as they are within many others. However, given the difficulties associated with effectively fulfilling such roles within the Occupied Territories (McDonald 2010; Holt 2003), a number of participants suggested that men should also look out for, and protect themselves, so as to ensure they remain present to contribute to their families and society. When Sahar, for instance, was asked what she felt was expected from men within Palestinian society she gave the following response:

I think that they are expected to fulfil their family's needs, to build a hopeful future for their own kids if they are married, if they are not married to be a productive part of making society a better place. To not be killed, actually, yeah, to not be killed (laughs). Because a lot of the Palestinian men's lives are being lost just for nothing (Interview with Sahar).

When asked the same question, Yousef made comments of a similar nature and emphasised the importance of avoiding arrest:

A good man, right now, is the man that works hard for his family, for his dad, for his mum. You don't get involved and you work just for your family. You try not to get arrested (Interview with Yousef).

#### **7.2.4 Caution and Vigilance**

In this setting, therefore, avoiding arrest or even death appears to have been something of a masculine duty; if men were unable to protect their families from violence they should at least try to ensure that they protected themselves (thus retaining their abilities to make at least some contribution to their families and society). As suggested above, this could be achieved, in part at least, by exercising a significant degree of caution and vigilance within spaces considered to be unsafe. Hence, as noted within Chapter 2, while risk-taking has often been associated with masculinity, and with militarised and hegemonic forms of masculinity in particular (Barrett 2001; Higate and Hopton 2005), it seemed that many of the participants had become risk-averse rather than risk-takers. Qualities such as caution and vigilance had thus been somewhat redefined as markers of masculinity within this context. In

the following extract, for example, Omar describes how Palestinian fathers tended to be cautious as a result of their past experiences:

(...) fathers lived in a period where anything could happen to them. Like you'd be arrested for just smiling at a soldier. It makes them very, very cautious (Interview with Omar).

Such attributes, though, did not appear to be confined to those who were fathers. Quite a number of participants, a sizeable majority of whom were in their late teens or early twenties, emphasised the need to exercise caution and vigilance, particularly at checkpoints. Sari, for instance, told of how he was reluctant to stand near soldiers at such sites, lest he be accused of carrying out a stabbing attack.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Hasheem explained how one could not even afford to allow one's foot to slip off the brake of one's car, as even "a small accident" at the checkpoint could prove fatal (Focus Group 1). Consequently, from a Palestinian perspective, in order to help ensure that soldiers at such sites did not have "excuses" with which to justify the employment of potentially lethal violence, it was imperative that they were made to "feel safe" by whatever means deemed necessary (Interview with Hasan).<sup>95</sup>

In order to live within the Occupied Territories, therefore, it appeared it was necessary to keep "on the safe zone" and to avoid doing anything which could be considered suspicious (Interview with Mustafa). One had to be "cautious" and to "adjust and tune" oneself depending on the situation at hand (Student Interview 16). Being "really careful", avoiding active involvement in politics, and using social media with caution was also advised (Interview with Ahmed); as was taking "extra measures" to enable one to "cope" and make it to the next day "without f\*\*\*ing up" (Interview with Sari). Ultimately, for much of their lives it seems that those within the Occupied Territories were focused on doing whatever they could "to live and

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<sup>94</sup> Sari was also wary about the planting of weapons at checkpoints, and described how an acquaintance of his had discovered a knife beneath the mat of his car after having had his vehicle searched. The person in question was thus forced to discard the knife before he reached any subsequent checkpoints.

<sup>95</sup> Hasan also described how, if it was dark, he would turn the lights on before approaching a checkpoint and would seek to ensure that everyone inside the car was visible to the soldiers.

stay alive” (Interview with Omar), so much so that for one participant they had even become “afraid of laughing” (Interview with Mohsen).<sup>96</sup>

Interestingly, all of the participants quoted above in relation to the need to exercise caution and vigilance were male. This, I believe, shows the extent to which civilian men in the Occupied Territories experience relative powerlessness and vulnerability, and perhaps the extent to which cautions are already set for women by virtue of their gender. The extracts also illustrate how civilian men modify their behaviour in order to ensure they are as safe as possible within the constraints imposed by their environment. Moreover, that caution and vigilance have become necessary masculine attributes within this context is apparent in the following extract, within which Edward emphasises how it is necessary for Palestinian men to remain “prepared”:

(...) you know as a Palestinian man you have to be prepared because you never know what you are going to face, what you are going to go through. So you have to be prepared, for your family and for yourself (Focus Group 2).

Such masculine attributes, however, appear to be in stark contrast, or even tension, with some of the more militarised ideals of Palestinian masculinity noted in Chapter 4. Indeed, as Gokani et al. (2015) contend, the historic image of the male freedom fighter has often been at odds with the lived experiences of the majority of men within the Occupied Territories, particularly in the post-second intifada era. Rather than engaging in confrontation, lived reality, it seems, often entails avoiding violence and maximising one’s security through attributes associated with caution and vigilance. While caution and vigilance may not be considered to be quintessentially masculine traits within other settings, they nevertheless appear to be most necessary for ensuring one’s safety within this context. At a broader level, this insight may provide but one example of how masculinities are redefined during conflict in ways which enable men to continue to utilise their agency, a point which is further discussed below.

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<sup>96</sup> Lawyer and activist.

### **7.3 Defining the Civilian – The Perspectives of Participants**

As Peteet (1994) states, under the military and political authority of a foreign power, Palestinians have few if any political rights. Under Article 4 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are “protected persons”, and Israel, as the occupying power, has a legal duty to safeguard their human rights (Imseis 2003: 100). Israel, however, regards its presence in the territories not as an occupation but as an “administration”, and argues that the Fourth Geneva Convention does not apply (Imseis 2003: 93). Since 1967, therefore, Israel has consistently violated almost every provision of the convention, the primary purpose of which is to minimise the effects of war on civilian populations (Imseis 2003).<sup>97</sup>

#### **7.3.1 Civilians as Security Threats**

Within the Occupied Territories, it appears that Palestinians are primarily regarded as security threats to be managed (Korsten 2011), rather than as civilians who should be protected from the effects of conflict. As non-citizens, it seems they fall outside the Israeli state’s national interest except to the extent that they represent a threat to state security (Edwards and Fersten 2010). Hence, while the security needs of the occupying power should in theory be balanced against the maintenance of the civil life of those occupied (Ben-Naftali et al. 2005), Israeli policy makers appear to struggle to view those occupied as civilians,<sup>98</sup> preferring instead to restrict their rights indefinitely in the interests of their own security.

As a result of such policies, a significant number of participants appeared to struggle with their civilian identity, the connotations associated with such a status seemingly failing to capture the reality of their lives. When Rashida, for instance, was asked how she understood her civilian identity, she explained that she did not “feel” like a civilian within this context:

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<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, while under Article 8 of the Rome Statute the “wilful killing” of “protected person” is regarded as a war crime, Israel has carried out such killings since the occupations inception (Imseis 2003: 137).

<sup>98</sup> Israel’s apparent reluctance to confer civilian status upon those living within the Occupied Territories was recently highlighted when Israeli Defence Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, declared that those who had lost their lives whilst protesting behind the security fence in the Gaza Strip were not “innocent civilians” but “ Hamas members.” This is despite the fact that among those who lost their lives was Yaser Murtaja, a Palestinian journalist who at the time of his shooting was wearing a blue jacket which was clearly marked “press” (Middle East Monitor 2018).

I don't feel as if I'm a civilian. In reality I'm a civilian, this is my land, this is my home, and I'm a civilian in it, ok. But really inside of me I don't feel like this. When I'm stopped at the checkpoint, if I'm a civilian I shouldn't be treated like this (Interview with Rashisa).

The above extract thus points to the perceived irrelevance of international law to the lived experience of conflict. Moreover, inherent within it is the suggestion that the extensive security screening to which Palestinians are continuously subjected undermines their identities as civilians. Such an inference is also found within the following extract, with Jamal arguing that the majority of Palestinians are not “treat(ed)” with due regard to their civilian status:

The Israeli military doesn't treat the majority of people here as civilians, because if they do that why do they investigate everybody, and stop everybody on the street, why do they search them, why do they search the children? So they don't treat Palestinians as civilians, even if they are civilians (Interview with Jamal).

### **7.3.2 A Different Kind of Civilian**

From the perspective of the participants, therefore, the security needs of the Israeli state had very much taken precedence over their rights as civilians. For some, they were civilians of a lower standard, “a different kind of civilian” (Focus Group 2). They were not civilians imbued with the rights and protections enjoyed by those living, say, within Ireland or the West Bank settlements (Focus Group 2; Interview with Fatima). For Reem, being a civilian within the Occupied Territories meant being imbued with rights one could not practice (Interview with Reem). While recognising their civilian identities, these participants were patently aware of the limited utility of their status as civilians within this setting.

The occupation, it was argued, could be found “in everything, small or large” (Interview with Emad), and as a result “a civilian life” was said to be impossible (Focus Group 2). For some participants, residing within the Occupied West Bank was said to be like living within a “giant” or “open air prison”, which meant that Palestinians could not therefore be civilians, or at least not “real” civilians (Interview with Anis; Interview with Lila). Thus, while one may hope that one's civilian status may help to ensure that one has “rights” and is “treated like a human

being” (Interview with Mohsen), the contributions made by participants appear to confirm that “violations of human rights are a necessary consequence of military occupation” (UN Special Rapporteur of the Commission of Human Rights, cited in Ben-Naftali et al. 2005: 58). It seems, then, that within such an environment one’s civilian status can only ever offer very limited protection from the effects of conflict.

### **7.3.3 Civilians as Uninvolved**

As discussed in Chapter 5, international actors have long agreed that those clearly not responsible for the prosecution of war, i.e. those considered to be “uninvolved”, should, in principle, be protected from its effects (Carpenter 2006a; Hartigan 2010).<sup>99</sup> However, as has also been noted within this chapter, civilians often contribute to war efforts in various ways, for example by supplying economic and political support (Melzer 2009). Their civilian identities are thus often imbued with economic, social and political ambiguities which implicate them in conflict to a greater or lesser extent (Slim 2008). Hence the degree to which civilians can remain uninvolved in conflict, without being thought to offer at least some form of material or ideological support to one side or another, appears to be questionable.

In the extract which follows, Hasan was asked about the extent to which those living within the Occupied Territories could remain uninvolved in the conflict. He very much rejected the suggestion that they could, and was of the opinion that they were not afforded the luxury of remaining thus, even if that was their wish. He was also of the belief that the nature of my research meant that I, too, had become somewhat involved in the conflict, and would therefore eventually have to “choose” which side I was on:

Uninvolved? Good luck (laughs), good luck! Because we are all involved to a certain extent, whether we like it or not. Your mere presence here is a threat to the Israelis, and it’s an obstacle. And they are willing to do everything and anything to remove it...Even you have become somewhat involved during your research. And eventually your

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<sup>99</sup> For example, Article 3 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) states that: “Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely.”

research is going to come up with results, and based on those results, you will have to choose (Interview with Hasan).

While those responsible for the prosecution of conflict are often said to find it hard to believe that civilians are not implicated in conflict in one way or another (Slim 2008), what this extract also shows is that civilians can struggle to separate themselves from conflict to the extent that they can be regarded, or can regard themselves, as being uninvolved. Within this context therefore, the uninvolved civilian appears to be something of an oxymoron, given that the mere presence of Palestinians is said to represent a threat to the Israeli state.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, the territorial aspect of the conflict appears to leave little ground on which the uninvolved civilian may stand. Accordingly, as Qustandi suggests, it appears that civilians living in the Occupied Territories are “part” of the conflict whether they desire to be or not:

I mean you are part of this whether you like it or not, so I think that is the thing that everyone has to understand. I mean there are some people who tell you...he is living his life, he doesn't mind anything...but you can't because the occupation affects you in every way possible so...you are a civilian, but you are a civilian in an occupational state (Focus Group 2).

As the previous participants suggest, therefore, it would appear to be virtually impossible to divorce one's life from the realities of conflict and occupation, however hard one might try to do so. While the civilian ethic seeks to elevate large numbers of people above the level of hostilities (Slim 2008), it seems that the reality of life within this context is very much at odds with the rights of civilians as enshrined within international law. Israel continues to violate the human rights of Palestinians living within the Occupied Territories in a myriad of ways, by employing lethal force against Palestinian demonstrators, restricting freedom of movement, limiting access to healthcare and education, expanding Israeli

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<sup>100</sup> At the end of 2000, for example, Jews accounted for fifty-three per cent of the population of historic Palestine. However, it is estimated that by 2050, Jews might only account for between thirty-five to thirty-seven per cent of the populace (DellaPergola 2003), thus threatening the viability of a Jewish state encompassing all of historic Palestine.

settlements and demolishing Palestinian homes, and by detaining prisoners from the Occupied Territories within Israel (Human Rights Watch 2019). Hence, it would appear necessary that the international community ensures the effective implementation of the law of occupation, and also examines the role which other bodies of law, including human rights law, may play in ensuring oversight and accountability in situations of extended occupation (Roberts 2007).

#### **7.4 Checkpoints and the Subjugation of Civilian Masculinities**

By examining the checkpoint regime we can, I believe, learn a great deal about how conflict and occupation have impacted upon the masculinities of civilian men within this context. As noted above, for almost three decades the Israeli state has operated a policy of closure and siege within the Occupied Territories, the checkpoints playing a key role in the policy's implementation. While their number has decreased somewhat in recent years (Kotef and Amir 2014), as of January 2017 there were ninety-eight permanent checkpoints in the West Bank, fifty-nine of which were internal and thirty-nine of which were considered entry points into Israel. 2,941 flying checkpoints, equivalent to 327 per month, were also recorded up until the end of September 2017 (B'Tselem 2017). Given the regularity with which Palestinians encounter them, checkpoints have thus become etched into the daily Palestinian experience (Zureik 2011).



*Figure 7: Tarkoumia Checkpoint (Levy 2014)*

As Amir (2014) notes, checkpoints are overwhelmingly masculine spaces. The majority of soldiers/security personnel are men, as are most of those crossing the more formalised checkpoints (which control entry into Israel) at least. They are thus

sites at which masculinities confront each other in particularly acute ways, albeit from very different positions of power, and are, therefore, as noted in Chapter 3, instrumental in reaffirming Palestinian and Israeli masculinities in relation to one another (Hochberg 2010). For Hochberg (2011: 558), the monopoly which Israeli soldiers have on the use of violence as such sites mean that they are often regarded, by both Israelis and Palestinians, as symbols of “true” masculinity and virility. However, the extent to which Palestinians regard the masculinised and militarised identities of Israeli soldiers to be legitimate is questioned below.

#### **7.4.1 Checkpoints and (Masculine) Humiliation**

Scholarship on the checkpoint regime has often made reference to its potential to humiliate. For Naaman (2006), checkpoints represent the daily and often humiliating friction between Palestinians and the Israeli occupation, while for Shatou (2009) the checkpoint regime in itself represents a system of institutionalised humiliation. Korsten (2011) argues that the humiliation of women at such sites usually consists of attacks which violate their moral codes of privacy and intimacy, while men are more likely to suffer loss of (masculine) status and physical violence. A significant number of research participants also spoke of experiencing humiliation at these sites, the dynamics of which are discussed below.

That the soldiers stationed at these sites were often in their teenage years seemed to heighten the sense of humiliation which participants felt during checkpoint interactions.<sup>101</sup> They lamented that young soldiers, whom they frequently referred to as “kids”, could “boss” them around at will despite that fact that they were often their seniors in terms of age (Focus Group 2). In the following extract, for example, Sahar describes the humiliation she experiences during interactions with soldiers whom she judges to be younger than her:

(...) once you reach the soldier you feel an incredible amount of humiliation because that soldier would look like they are fifteen years old, and you would be like twenty (laughs). And then when the soldier tells you “ok, now you can move”, you feel like your entire life dignity was stepped over by this human being (Interview with Sahar).

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<sup>101</sup> Peteet (2017) has also noted that the soldiers stationed at Israeli checkpoints are often teenagers.

While the majority of research participants were undergraduate students, and, therefore, not much older than the soldiers they encountered, participants appeared to suggest that the bigger the age gap between the soldier and the civilian, the greater the potential for humiliation. While insults directed at younger men seemed to be somewhat expected or even accepted, those directed at older men appeared to be considered beyond the pale. Hasheem, for example, described how soldiers of eighteen or nineteen years old would often intentionally insult men of his grandfather's age (Focus Group 1), the contrast in age between those insulting and those being insulted clearly being a source of significant irritation. Similarly, in the extract which follows, Mourid describes how his father, whom he considers a "respected man", is treated no better than a teenager; his "honour" being challenged as a result:

My father is an old respected man and same thing as a teenager. "Stop, give me the ID, go open the back door"...whatever...it's not nice, disrespect...because in Arabic culture, the guy have the honour they have to keep it and then when they go to that checkpoint and a young guy, an eighteen-year-old guy is bossing them around it affects their honour, but they can't do anything about it (Focus Group 2).

The contributions made by these participants can shed light on the gendered nature of humiliation at these sites in a number of ways. Firstly, they suggest, as noted within Chapter 6, that gender intersects with other markers of identity such as age, class and marital status in determining one's standing within society (Myrntinen et al. 2014), with older Palestinian men occupying a more privileged position than their younger counterparts. The soldiers, however, appear to largely disregard the gendered hierarchies among the Palestinians they encounter and by treating older and younger men the "same", transgress the social norms upheld by Palestinian society. In doing so, it seems that they offend not only older Palestinian men, but all those within Palestinian society who must watch those who they regard as their elders being treated with "disrespect." The harm inflicted is thus collective rather than individual and would appear to represent an attack on the Palestinian community at large, as is suggested by Sabri in the following extract:

(Multiple) generations will be watching, so the insult and the disrespect is not only for this guy (the individual involved), but for everybody (Focus Group 1).

Secondly, the humiliation experienced at such sites involves the presence of an audience. As Fattah and Fierke (2009) argue, the power of humiliation lies in public exposure and the public acknowledgement that humiliation has taken place. As Korsten (2011) has noted, the indignities suffered at these sites are especially grave as they often occur in front of a Palestinian audience, i.e. those who are the sources of one's social worth and self-esteem. The input of the participants thus highlights the extent to which the disempowering impact of checkpoints lies not in the acts which occur at these sites, but in their social interpretation within Palestinian society (Foster 2011).

Thirdly, as noted in the extract above, there appeared to be a consensus that men within Palestinian society have "honour" which they must endeavour to "keep." As a defining frame of masculinity, Holt (2003) notes that honour is attained by a willingness to save face and protect kin and community from external aggression. Women are often thought to be bearers of male honour (El Feki et al. 2017),<sup>102</sup> while men are considered its protectors (Katz 1996; Holt 2003; MacKenzie and Foster 2017). Within this context, it appeared that there was often an expectation that men should be "defensive of females", and should respond accordingly if women were "insulted" or suffered an "injustice" (Interview with Omar). Ahmed also opined that soldiers would often take "care" whilst dealing with women, as they were aware of Palestinian and Arab norms around women as bearers of male honour. For him, therefore, the unspoken plea of Palestinians men during such interactions was "do not touch my women", lest I am robbed of my "honour."

However, despite the view expressed by Ahmed, it appears that checkpoints are often sites at which men suffer a loss of honour, their patriarchal image undermined by their inability to defend themselves or their families/communities against humiliation. Foster (2011: 80), for example, argues that if children at such sites

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<sup>102</sup> In the previously mentioned IMAGES study conducted in the Occupied Territories, sixty-six per cent of the women who participated supported the view that they were bearers of male honour (El Feki et al. 2017).

witness those who they view as “almost holy” stripped of their power and defenceless, it can call into question their very status as masculine guardians, and thus can be experienced as deeply emasculating. At a broader level, Abu Nahleh (2006) contends that the Israeli occupation has played a major role in destroying the masculine roles and patriarchal image adult men have sought to maintain, the aim of which would appear to be the undermining of the social fabric of Palestinian society.<sup>103</sup>

It seems, however, that in describing the power that these “kids” had to “boss” both them and their seniors around, the participants suggested that the masculinised power that the young soldiers had acquired by virtue of their military positions was ultimately illegitimate,<sup>104</sup> an aberration of the normal process of proving one’s masculinity, through, for example, weathering life’s many storms over several decades. By contrast, it seems the participants regarded the masculinities of older Palestinian men as much superior, including morally superior (see Kortsen 2011), to their young and armed Israeli counterparts, even if this was not reflected within the power dynamics present at checkpoints.

The perceived illegitimacy of the power of young Israeli soldiers is also, I believe, evident in the following extract. Within it, Fatima describes how she gained a degree of power during an interaction within an Israeli soldier by finding out that he was, in fact, younger than she was:

He (the soldier) was insecure, you know. And he asked me “how old are you?” And I said “twenty-two, what about you?” (laughs). And he said “are you asking me? I’m twenty.” And the old man (who was with me) said “so you’re younger than her” (laughs). And I laughed, that was funny” (Interview with Fatima).

Beyond the fact that “kids” were often the ones who held power at checkpoints, the practice of body/strip searches would also leave Palestinians vulnerable to being humiliated/emasculated at these sites (Peteet 2017). While Israel justifies its use of

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<sup>103</sup> In a similar manner Jabr (2015) has argued that the occupation has deliberately attacked and discredited those with the potential to act as positive father figures, thereby undermining the structure of both Palestinian families and communities.

<sup>104</sup> Korsten (2011) has also noted that while soldiers at checkpoints may exert violence in order to assert and maintain their superior power, their hegemony as such is not recognised by Palestinians.

forced strip and full body searches by arguing that “exceptional national security” requires “exceptional military measures” (Hochberg 2010: 578), Hochberg (2010) argues that they function to produce the Palestinian body as both a symbol of danger and an object of complete subjugation. The potential of such searches to embarrass and humiliate was also described by participants (Interview with Ahmed; Focus Group 1), and it became clear that they represented a significant threat to the gender identities of those subjected to them.

During a conversation with Yasser, for example, he informed me that during the second intifada, when he worked at a Palestinian university, he would give his students two pieces of advice before setting off on a journey. The first was that they use the bathroom beforehand, as it was impossible to predict how long one might be waiting or detained at a checkpoint. The second piece of advice, which was directed towards the male students, was to wear boxer shorts instead of briefs lest they should be asked to reveal their underwear at a checkpoint. His logic appeared to be that boxer shorts were more masculine than briefs, or perhaps less revealing than briefs, and thus less humiliating to reveal in public (Field notes, 25<sup>th</sup> October '16). The perceived necessity of such preparations thus reveals the extent to which men within Palestinian society attempt to avoid humiliation at these sites - by exercising caution and vigilance at a bodily level, a theme which is further discussed in Chapter 8.

The potential for body searches to humiliate those subjected to them is also highlighted by Hasan. As revealed in the extract below, he describes how being “frisked” can “poke” on the “self-respect” of Palestinian men. He makes reference to the factors identified above which appear to make checkpoint interactions particularly degrading or humiliating, namely, the relative youth of the soldiers and the presence of an audience (and a Palestinian audience in particular). Moreover, in comparing the masculine credentials of those searched with those carrying out such searches, it seems he too regards the masculinised power of young Israeli soldiers to be illegitimate. Finally, that those with illegitimate masculine power are bullying those with a legitimate claim to masculine authority would also appear to be a source of significant frustration:

So let's take a scenario that you have been harassed at the checkpoint.

You're a father and you have your respect, and you have grandchildren,

you got married at eighteen and you have grandchildren already and what not, and you're still working, and you got harassed at the checkpoint by a f\*\*\*ing eighteen year old, and you got frisked...So eventually of course it is going to influence you, and it's going to influence how a man is perceived. And if your friends saw you being frisked, and bullied, and pushed around maybe by a bunch of kids, they're eventually kids, it's gonna poke on your ego, it's gonna poke on your respect, your self-respect (Interview with Hasan).

Fattah and Fierke (2009: 72) note that in Arabic the word for humiliation (*Dhul*) means “dropping to one’s knees before someone stronger.” In this context, therefore, that those humiliated appeared to be regarded as stronger, in terms of their claims to masculine authority, may help to explain why being bossed around by kids appeared to be a source of significant frustration for a substantial number of participants. Moreover, as Shatou (2009) argues, although the victim of humiliation may not value the standards of worthiness defined by the humiliator, he or she may still succeed in shattering the victim’s self-respect. Within this context, it also seems that the perceived illegitimacy of the masculinised power of the soldiers, and by default their standards of worthiness, did not diminish the sense of humiliation which participants felt at being forced to obey their orders (or having to witness others obey their orders). By contrast, it appears that the illegitimacy of the power of the soldiers only served to increase the sense of humiliation which participants experienced during such interactions.

#### **7.4.2 Female Masculinity**

As has been noted in Chapter 2, there is not necessarily a link between men and masculinity (Sa’ar and Yahia-Younis 2008), as masculinity can also be performed by women (Dowd 2008). This can be observed, for example, in military institutions, within which female soldiers often perform various forms of militarised masculinity (Korsten 2011). Within this context, it also appeared to be the case that female soldiers performed such forms of masculinity. Indeed, there appeared to be a consensus among participants that such soldiers often performed their masculinities in a particularly aggressive manner, behaving in ways considered particularly “impulsive” and “mean” (Interview with Amal; Interview with Ghada). Despite this,

however, participants also appeared to perceive the power wielded by female soldiers to be even less legitimate than that wielded by their male counterparts.

The participants put forward a number of theories as to why female soldiers tended to behave in a more belligerent manner. Amal held the view that female soldiers were intoxicated with the power they believed they possessed, the desire to express this power being reflected in their behaviour.<sup>105</sup> Anis felt that they were often scared, and hence “overprotective” of themselves. For, Noa,<sup>106</sup> women within the workplace often had to work “twice as hard” to prove that they were just as capable as men, and was of the belief that similar dynamics were at play within the Israeli military. For her, therefore, female soldiers could not be seen to be “too kind” as they were being constantly measured against male standards.

My own observations also appeared to confirm that female soldiers within this context performed various forms of militarised masculinity. On the occasions that I crossed by bus from the West Bank into Israel, for example, I learned that it was standard practice for soldiers to enter in order to check the documents of the passengers. Such was the confinement of space, the size of their guns, and the absence of any pleasantries, I found such encounters to be quite intimidating. The fact that such soldiers were often female did little to calm my anxieties, their militarised identities proving to be as equally threatening as those of their male counterparts.

As noted above, however, it is my reading that the participants appeared to perceive the power wielded by female soldiers to be even less legitimate than that wielded by their male counterparts, their female bodies ultimately betraying their highly militarised and masculinised performances. Some of the participants also seemed to be of the belief that the soldiers themselves were highly aware of this legitimacy deficit. Their heightened aggression can thus read as an attempt to deflect attention or scrutiny away from their masculinised identities, lest they be found wanting. It therefore seemingly came from a place of deep insecurity and a desire to avoid the

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<sup>105</sup> Amal also made reference to the power which female soldiers believed they possessed, rather than that which they actually had, which would suggest that she too regarded the power of Israeli soldiers to be illegitimate or concocted.

<sup>106</sup> MachsomWatch volunteer.

(masculine) humiliation and victimisation associated with the pre-Zionist period (as discussed in Chapter 5).

It was not just Palestinian participants, however, who appeared to question the legitimacy of the masculinised power of female soldiers. Indeed, the most direct critique of such power was offered by Noa, an Israeli MachsomWatch volunteer whose daughter was serving in the Israeli military at the time interview. While her comments appeared to be more of a critique of the checkpoint regime rather than of the (female) soldiers who served at such sites, they nevertheless suggest that female soldiers perform a kind of militarised masculinity which is far removed from their real identities and youthful preoccupations.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, given that this participant was part of Israeli society, it was perhaps even more apparent to her that female soldiers were following gendered scripts rather than simply displaying their militarised and masculinised identities, as is revealed below:

(...) sometimes you see these poor girls, and you know that they are silly, giddy girls who are only really interested in boys and movies and make-up, and they are sitting there (at the checkpoint control booth) for 12 hours and so they're playing on their cell phones, and of course they forget to press the button (to allow those waiting to proceed), because they get carried away, I don't know if they are watching, what's her name, Kim Kardashian (laughs)... But you know it's so sad. You see these girls coming walking out after a shift and she's got her bulletproof vest, she's got her gun, and then she's carrying a sack and it's got Pokémon on it or Barbie. And you think, something's all wrong there (Interview with Noa).

### **7.4.3 Personal Reflections**

From my own observations at various checkpoints, the oppressiveness of the regime and its ability to humiliate became evident. Whilst observing at Qualandia checkpoint between Ramallah and Jerusalem early one morning, for example, I saw hundreds of people (the overwhelming majority of whom were men) waiting to get

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<sup>107</sup> It was also apparent that Noa empathised with the position which these young soldiers often found themselves in, i.e. having to undertake often long and boring shifts at checkpoints instead of being free to pursue their own (innocent and carefree) interests. Understandably, however, Palestinian participants often did not view the position of soldiers with such understanding.

to work. All had to pass through the narrow metal passageways, endure the gaze of the soldier, and wait for the turnstile to be remotely opened before being subjected to airport-like security screening. As the gate opened, some would run in order to present themselves for such screening before those behind them. While this was a pragmatic response, in that it helped to ensure that one passed through the checkpoint as quickly as possible, it also seemed to represent a kind of imposed infantilization upon those crossing. For my part, I was not quite sure whether I was a witness to the humiliation of occupation, or perhaps a somewhat unwelcome visitor who was only serving to reinforce the subjugation of those I was observing.

On the occasion that I visited the Bethlehem 300 Checkpoint between Bethlehem and Jerusalem (my experience of which has also been discussed in Chapter 3), I witnessed a mass of male bodies making their way to their places of work in Jerusalem. Many others continued to wait on the street for their lifts to work, or hang around coffee or fast food stands. Some were sitting on the pavement with cardboard mats perched below them, while others were sprawled out hoping to catch a few minutes' sleep. Those waiting had endured the oppressiveness of the checkpoint itself, only to have to wait at the side of the road in relative darkness before their work could begin. That so many were crowded around this site at 5.30 am revealed the power of the checkpoint regime to subject large numbers of people to the will of the Israeli state, with scant regard for their dignity or humanity.

Hence, if it is indeed the case that control “constitutes a crucial element of masculinity” (Safilos-Rothschild 2000: 91), then it is an element which men at this site (and others like it) were denied the luxury of drawing upon whilst seeking to affirm their masculinities. And while it must be noted that my respondents did not, as yet, have to endure regularly crossing these sites at such an hour, the cumulative effect of such experiences upon the society would appear to be significant.

The gendered impact of checkpoints, as sites at which the subjugation of Palestinians is made visible, should not therefore be underestimated. For Hochberg (2010), checkpoints have not only robbed men of them of their dignity and agency, but also their masculinity. While one may not entirely agree with Hochberg's generalisation, the argument that Palestinian men often experience checkpoints as feminising and/or emasculating (as has noted within Chapter 5) appears much more

difficult to refute (Namaan 2006; Greenburg 2009; Foster 2011). Although Palestinians may not recognise the legitimacy of the masculinised power to which they are subjected at such sites, it nevertheless seems that there is little to gain and much to lose in terms of one's masculine sense of self. While the checkpoint regime is maintained, it appears it will continue to be challenging for men in the Occupied Territories to "keep" their "manhood" (Foster 2011: 74).

Examining the checkpoint regime thus highlights some of the often overlooked gendered dynamics of armed conflict discussed within Chapter 2. It highlights, for instance, the extent to which civilian men may be vulnerable to the effects of related conflict violence (Dolan 2002; Jones 2004; Wright 2014), and how this may threaten their gender identities and be experienced as deeply disempowering and potentially emasculating (Dolan 2002; Linos 2009; Foster 2011; Lwambo 2013). It also highlights the extent to which gendered assumptions which assert that men are the universal aggressors, and women the universal victims, are oversimplifications of the dynamics of armed conflict (Cleaver 2000). Examining the checkpoint regime thus stresses the necessity of rethinking gendered assumptions in order to enable them to encompass the impact of conflict upon men and their gendered identities (Segal 2008).

## **7.5 The Affirmation of Masculine Identities**

Thus far, I have examined some of the ways in which ongoing conflict and military occupation have impacted upon the lives and gender identities of my respondents. I have examined their vulnerability to conflict violence, and also the ways in which caution and vigilance appear to have become essential masculine attributes. I have discussed what it means to be civilian in this setting, and also the extent to which being categorised as such fails to offer men in particular, protection from conflict violence. I have also noted the violence associated with the checkpoint regime and the role it plays in the subjugation of Palestinian masculinities. Thus far therefore, I have largely examined the ways in which Palestinian men and their masculinities have been subjugated as a result of conflict and occupation.

As Nordstrom (1997) writes, however, war is not something that happens to people as static, passive or generic victims. Instead, they respond in dynamic ways and

negotiate their daily survival based on what is possible. Accordingly, in this section I focus on the ways in which Palestinian men negotiate the conflict environment and continue to find ways to express their masculinities based on the resources at their disposal (see Connell 2002). In particular, I explore how knowledge, the pooling of economic resources, and persistence enable men in these circumstances to continue to lay claim to the validity of their masculine identities.

### **7.5.1 Knowledge of the Conflict Environment**

During interactions with participants it became clear that knowledge, in various forms, was a resource used by men both to negotiate the complexities of the conflict environment and support their masculine identities. A broad understanding of the political context and its practical implications was one such form of knowledge. Participants appeared to suggest that the more knowledgeable one was in this respect, the better one could avoid or solve the challenges involved in living under conditions of occupation. This form of knowledge seemed to be held as both a masculine responsibility and, indeed, a marker of masculinity.

The value which participants placed on this form of knowledge is revealed below. One participant, for instance, described how men should be “street smart” and know how to “interact” with Israeli soldiers (Focus Group 2). In a similar manner, his colleague argued that men should “know what they are doing when it comes to the occupation” and “should maybe have a background about what is going on” (Focus Group 2). Other participants spoke of how men needed to be “clever a little bit” (Interview with Ahmed) or just simply “aware” of “things” (Interview with Fatima; Interview with Ghada). Indeed for Ahmed, such was the level of knowledge necessary that a man in this situation needed to be “a genius” in order to deal with the complexities of the occupation:

(...) if you want to be a man here in Palestine you need to know everything, know really everything! I need to be like a genius in this land (laughs)! To deal with everything! To deal with everything! (Interview with Ahmed).

The necessity of possessing this form of knowledge appeared to be closely linked to the need to remain cautious and vigilant when negotiating the conflict environment, as has been discussed above. The participants suggested that the more knowledge

one had, the more effectively one could read a given situation and exercise caution and vigilance accordingly. Utilising this form of knowledge to maximum effect appeared to enable Palestinian men to use their agency and maximise their safety within an environment which provided little of either. In the following extract, for example, Hasan describes how those who regularly cross Qualandia checkpoint accumulate knowledge about the soldiers with whom they interact, and suggests that they use such knowledge in order to more effectively manage their interactions with soldiers whom they may particularly dislike:<sup>108</sup>

There is a lot of people moving back and forward (across the checkpoint) every day. And some of them are Jerusalem residents, they know Hebrew, they work in Jerusalem, they work in Tel Aviv, so they know the language. And I think they know how to cherry pick the pr\*\*ks (soldiers). They know exactly who is a pr\*\*k and they know exactly where to place him...they know exactly who is a complete j\*\*k... (Interview with Hasan).

A number of the participants appeared to suggest that this form of knowledge had largely been masculinised, arguing that it was primarily men who were “expected” to be ones who do the talking at checkpoints and, and as noted above, “deal” with the occupation more generally (Focus Group 2; Interview with Habib). Hence, by this reading, one could speculate that men were attempting to utilise this form of knowledge, perhaps to the detriment of the agency of women. However, while there was clearly masculine value in possessing it, it is also the case that women too could utilise this form of knowledge during their interactions with Israeli soldiers. As pointed out by Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009), women are often asked to cross checkpoints when their male kinfolk are too afraid of suffering violence or humiliation to do so. Thus, in some circumstances, the vulnerability of men may serve to increase the responsibility of women within public space.

Perhaps it is not surprising then, that men who have been subject to oppression in many aspects of their lives have sought to consolidate the power which remains available to them, through for example, emphasising their masculine knowledge of

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<sup>108</sup> Qualandia is the main checkpoint that leads from Ramallah to East Jerusalem (Korsten 2011). In recent years it has come to resemble an international border crossing (Peteet 2017).

the conflict environment. As noted above, Palestine remains a highly traditional and patriarchal society and it is argued that the occupation continues to provide justification for the maintenance of patriarchal social structures under the pretext of defending women and the family (El Feki et al. 2017). Hence, as has been suggested in Chapter 6 and as will be further discussed in Chapters 8 and 9, it would seem important that interventions which seek to empower women in conflict and post-conflict societies also enable men to access civilian symbols of masculine prestige, lest such efforts prove counterproductive (see Dolan 2002; Theidon 2009).

### **7.5.2 Knowledge of Hebrew**

Another form of knowledge which men appeared to use both to negotiate the occupation and enhance their masculine identities was that of the Hebrew language. As highlighted by post-colonial studies, colonial language has often been appropriated by those subjected to colonial rule in order to confront their oppressors (Said 1994; Katrak 1989).<sup>109</sup> Within this context, it has been noted that the ability to speak Hebrew provides great symbolic capital for Palestinian men, providing proof that they have been able to “figure out” the language and also that they have worked (or can work) within Israel (Rothenberg 2006: 97). For participants, the ability to speak Hebrew was said to be highly advantageous and something which many of them felt Palestinian men should strive to master.

In their interactions with soldiers, participants suggested that their ability to understand or respond more effectively reduced their vulnerability to mistreatment or abuse. As Ghada described: “the soldiers, they are talking Hebrew, so if you don’t understand you may be yelled at, treated badly.” By contrast, Anis explained that: “speaking Hebrew gives you a plus, because it shows them (the soldiers) that you understand what they’re saying.” By understanding their language, therefore, Palestinians could gain a measure of “safety” during these interactions (Interview with Rashida). Indeed, it appears it is not uncommon for young Palestinians to learn at least some Hebrew primarily for the purpose of being able to communicate more effectively with Israeli soldiers (Interview with Anis; Focus Group 2).

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<sup>109</sup> Said (1994: 271), for instance, has noted how Franz Fanon drew on the language of early French colonialism, and its biblical imagery of birth and genealogy, in order to describe the relationship between France and its colonial “children.”

In addition, a number of participants suggested that having knowledge of Hebrew made it easier for soldiers to humanise and “respect” them, thereby reducing tensions (and also perhaps serving to further reduce their vulnerability to abuse). Ghada explained that:

If you know the language of your enemy, it is good because you know what they are talking about, what they need from you. If you speak to them in Hebrew, they respect you, really. Yeah, yeah, “you know our language”, something like that, “you know our language” (Interview with Ghada).

In a similar manner, in the extract which follows Hasan expressed the view that speaking to the soldiers in Hebrew helps to create “familiarity” and to ensure that the interaction is somewhat less hostile:

Creating that familiarity and breaking the language barrier somehow, to a certain level, makes the situation a little bit less unfriendly. I do believe so. Like my Hebrew isn’t perfect but I found out that the more I learn Hebrew the more comfortable they become (Interview with Hasan).

Moreover, beyond the fact that interactions at checkpoint appeared to be considered primarily a masculine responsibility, a number of participants expressed the view that the ability to speak Hebrew was a marker of Palestinian masculinity in a broader sense. Rashisa, for instance, expressed the view that: “To be a successful man in Palestine you have to know the Hebrew language” (Interview with Rashisa). Her logic appeared to be that knowledge of Hebrew opened up opportunities for work in Israel (which is often much better remunerated), the inference being that earning a good income was a marker of masculine success.

For Sahar, learning Hebrew was also a way for men to “deal” with the occupation and was, therefore, something of a masculine expectation alongside “working” and “trying not to get killed.” In a similar manner, when Raed was asked how he felt men in this context perform masculinity in light of the occupation, he responded by expressing the opinion that men should strive to learn Hebrew, as they were “living right next door” to those who spoke this language.

In short, therefore, knowledge of Hebrew appeared to be a resource which at least some men in this context could use in order to validate or support their masculine identities, in spite of the oppressiveness of the occupation. Not only did it enable them to demonstrate their intelligence and agency during interactions with soldiers at checkpoints, but it also enhanced their employment prospects and was a pragmatic response to living so close to Hebrew speakers. Learning Hebrew, thus, was perhaps one of the most potentially empowering endeavours that men in this context could seek to pursue. Hence, while participants may not have used Hebrew to directly confront their oppressors, they nevertheless utilised it in order to feel at least somewhat more empowered whilst interacting with them and living and working within Israeli society.

### **7.5.3 Academic Knowledge**

A third form of knowledge which men appeared keen to use to their advantage was scholarly or academic knowledge. As De Sonny (2015) states, there is great emphasis on the pursuit of learning within Islamic traditions. In this setting, Yasser explained that academic knowledge is highly valued as Palestinians view it as something which not even the machinery of occupation can take away (Field Notes, 25th October '16). Moreover, while literature on Palestine has made little reference to academic knowledge as a marker of masculinity, it appeared that the participants felt that this was a form of knowledge which men should possess or acquire.<sup>110</sup>

For example, when asked to describe the attributes or qualities which men in this context should have, a number of participants stated the importance of having a good education (Interview with Lila; Interview with Omar; Interview with Anis; Interview with Jamal; Interview with Sahar; Interview with Sayed; Focus Group 1). It appears that part of the reason why participants felt that men should possess this related to the potential for enhanced employment opportunities and income, or the enhanced role that one could play in their community (Interview with Sahar).

Other participants also highlighted the extent to which knowledge gained as a result of their educational endeavours, such as English language skills or knowledge of the

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<sup>110</sup> It is worth noting, however, that given that the overwhelming majority of research participants were either students or members of staff at Palestinians universities, it is perhaps not surprising that many of them regarded academic knowledge to be a marker of masculinity within this context.

law of occupation, reduced their vulnerability during interactions with soldiers (Interview with Raed; Interview with Rashida). Additionally, a good education may provide one with greater opportunities to gain employment in an area that does not require crossing checkpoints as part of one's daily commute, or indeed afford one greater status and ease of crossing when one is required to pass through such sites.<sup>111</sup>

Hence, in a variety of ways it seems that participants were of the belief that academic knowledge would enable them to persist in Palestine and even push back against the occupation. For Sayed, having a good education meant that one could remain in Palestine “like the olive tree”, while for Sami education was their “greatest weapon” in their battle against oppression. And while men and women could both benefit from the fruits of higher education, it is perhaps the case that the more public nature of men's responsibilities (Mackenzie and Foster 2017), including those of providing and protecting (Johnson and Kuttab 2001; Amireh 2003), meant that men could accrue more benefits from their academic knowledge than their female counterparts.<sup>112</sup> Such knowledge was, therefore, perhaps more masculinised than may be the case within societies which are considered to have a higher degree of gender equality.

In a variety of ways then, it seems that academic knowledge enabled participants to exercise their agency, reduce their vulnerabilities, and persist and even resist in the face of occupation and oppression. This form of knowledge, like the other forms discussed above, was a resource which participants could draw upon whilst constructing their masculine identities. It must be noted, however, that academic knowledge or language ability may be resources which not all civilians in this, or other conflict-affected contexts, may have access to or are able to utilise. It nevertheless seems critical that, even in situations of conflict and oppression, that people can retain at least some resources which they can utilise to support their gender identities.

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<sup>111</sup> During a conversation with Yasser, he stated that it was mainly working-class men who were required to cross the (more formalised) checkpoints separating the West Bank and Israel. He also expressed the view that the fact that he now worked for an international organisation generally allowed him to cross checkpoints with greater ease (Field Notes, 25<sup>th</sup> October '16).

<sup>112</sup> Hence, for example while female participation in the workforce appears to have become increasingly normalised in recent years (Interview with Reem), a number of participants felt that women's participation in the workforce was still regarded by some as non-normative (Interview with Lila; Interview with Raed).

#### **7.5.4 The Pooling of Economic Resources**

I have noted above how the ability to provide is an important marker of masculinity within Palestinian society (Amireh 2003), and how in many cases the occupation has denied men the opportunity to provide for their families (Gokani et al. 2015). Men's roles are said to have been undermined within this context to such an extent that a "crisis" of "breadwinner(s)" has even been discussed (Abu Nahleh 2006: 181). Still, crisis or not, it appears to be the case that men in this situation are often deprived of the economic resources necessary to adequately fulfil their masculine roles and support their masculine identities (McDonald 2010; El Feki et al. 2017).

As Kuttab (2006) notes, however, the extended family is often an important safety net which Palestinians use for the pooling and redistribution of resources. Such a structure would appear to reduce the loss of face associated with an individualised failure to provide. Several participants also spoke about the role the family can play in coping with economic challenges and reducing the burden on individuals. Anis, for instance, spoke about how men in families often work together in order to ensure provision:

(...) you'll find families putting hands together to provide, you know. Like you'll see a father and a son, maybe two sons just working to provide for themselves...One hand doesn't clap, that's a traditional or old saying (Interview with Anis).

In a similar manner, in the extract below Yezid explained how the extended family would help with the costs associated with marriage, ensuring that the groom does not carry the financial burden alone. He also suggested that family "solidarity" was a distinct feature of Palestinian society:

(So take for) example a brother that wants to get married. It's never like anywhere else where he carries the entire burden. Everyone supports with whatever they can, solidarity. Relatives, family members, solidarity in everything is one way of coping (Focus Group 1).

It seems that the pooling of financial resources in order to meet the financial costs associated with marriage is particularly important in ensuring that youths can fully

take their place within Palestinian society. As Peteet (1994) notes, marriage is seen as an important marker of masculinity, with unmarried men often referred to as youths or boys until after they are married (McDonald 2010). I experienced something of this at first-hand when one of my participants, Ramzi, a secondary school teacher, asked me if I was married. When I told him that I was not he responded by asking why. He also spoke of how his unmarried brother of a similar age was a source of disappointment in this regard to his mother and father (Field Notes, 5<sup>th</sup> October '16).

What these examples seek to demonstrate, therefore, is that families in this context often pool together the resources necessary to support the masculine identities of men in this context. At a broader level it may also suggest that when resources available to support these identities are scarce, during or after conflict for example, drawing upon collective resources may be one way of helping to ensure that men's gendered self-worth remains supported. Drawing upon these collective resources therefore may enable them to take their place as men within Palestinian society when otherwise this may be beyond their reach.

### **7.5.5 Persistence**

As has been referenced within Chapter 5, much of what has been written on the Palestinian experience has referred to the concept of endurance or *sumud* (Smith 2010). This concept refers to the ability to persevere despite oppression and hardship (Foster 2011). While this concept has often been linked to qualities associated with femininity (Foster 2011), one could make the case that it can also be linked to qualities associated with masculinity. Gokani et al. (2015), for example, found that fathers in the Occupied Territories would model their masculinities around quiet and stoical persistence in the face of adversity.

During conversations with research participants, the will to remain in Palestine and to persist with their lives was very much evident. Omar expressed the view that the most common form of resistance was “not leaving the country”, while Hasheem was of the belief that it was for Israelis, rather than Palestinians, “to leave” (Focus Group 1). For these participants, therefore, to continue to live in Palestine was to oppose the occupation, as simply moving from one city to another was “a struggle” (Focus Group 2). That said however, I was informed by Hiam, a Palestinian academic, that

many young people were leaving Palestine (Field Notes, 1<sup>st</sup> November '16), and it is perhaps the case that having a good education increases the viability of doing so. Nevertheless, it seems that the will to persist provided many Palestinians with a sense of “purpose” and, indeed, a strong sense of “identity”, as described in the extract below:

Everyone in Palestine has a purpose, is born with that purpose, and that one purpose is *free your land*. Usually Palestinian kids don't have an identity crisis, because they are born with a purpose. And that really helps us out a little bit. You know you are born to grow up, and to better your country, or your family, and hopefully eventually you will be able to have some influence on what's going on around you” (Interview with Hasan).

It is my reading that this will to persist, this “purpose”, provided Palestinians with an important resource to draw upon whilst constructing their gender identities. During one of the focus groups, Naim argued that remaining in Palestine, despite the many challenges, was sufficient to qualify one as a “man.” And not just any type of man, but “a real man” (Focus Group 1). For him, “the youngest girl in Palestine” would be able to recognise the masculine credentials of those who could continue to live within this context. Hence, for Naim, and perhaps for many others, simply remaining in Palestine was a mark of masculine “success” (Focus Group 1).

What I believe these examples suggest is that resistance, and, in fact, markers of masculine success, have been to some extent been renegotiated to account for the oppressive and pervasive nature of conflict and occupation. If, for instance, the message of the checkpoint regime is “Leave! Life is not going to be easy” (Peteeet 2017: 107), then remaining in Palestine and continuing to cross these sites on a daily basis can, I believe, be considered a form of (masculine) resistance. Perhaps, therefore, in the face of overwhelming oppression, persistence is tantamount to resistance, and is thus a masculinising endeavour.<sup>113</sup> Despite this, it is important to

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<sup>113</sup> A number of scholars have noted how resisting the occupation is often considered masculinising (Massad 1995; Holt 2003; McDonald 2010).

remember that those who remain in Palestine often pay a high price in terms of the endurance of poverty, insecurity, trauma, and the denial of fundamental rights; as has been highlighted above and within Chapters 4 and 5.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored how protracted conflict and military occupation have impacted upon the lives and identities of civilian participants within the Occupied Territories. It has drawn attention to the vulnerability to which men in particular are exposed to, and explored the meaning and value of being categorised as a civilian. It has also examined the ways in which Palestinian masculinities have been subjugated, particularly with regard to the checkpoint regime. Moreover, it has highlighted some of the ways in which masculinities have been redefined in the context of conflict and occupation.

I have sought to show, for example, how caution and vigilance appear to have been redefined as masculine traits within this context, and how participants have interpreted the masculinities of Israeli soldiers to be ultimately illegitimate. I have also argued that various forms of knowledge, as well as the pooling of economic resources and persistence, are resources which men in this context have utilised in order to exercise their agency and support their masculine identities. To conclude, therefore, it seems that even in situations of conflict and occupation, men can find ways to utilise the resources at their disposal to help offset the undermining of their gender identities.

In the chapter which follows, I discuss how the findings from both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories can contribute to our understanding of masculinities and conflict more broadly, particularly in light of what they reveal about civilian men.

## **Chapter 8: Civilian Masculinities in Conflict-Affected Contexts**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses how the findings outlined in Chapters 6 and 7 contribute to our understanding of civilian masculinities and conflict. It explores the ways in which conflict has shaped masculinities within Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and highlights the commonalities and points of departure in terms of the experiences and identities of the participants. Whilst drawing upon the data which emerged from these sites, the chapter also aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of masculinities and conflict than has resonance beyond the borders of either Northern Ireland or the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The chapter begins by reminding the reader of the gaps in the literature and the rationale for the examination of civilian masculinities within two seemingly quite disparate sites of conflict. It then discusses the themes which resonated to a significant extent within both sites, as well as discussing those which were more context-specific. Finally, the chapter concludes by highlighting the ways in which the research contributes to our understanding of masculinities and conflict more broadly, and (as suggested previously) opens up space for new theoretical approaches and policy interventions which may be applicable to multiple conflict-affected contexts.

### **8.2 Gaps in the Literature**

In order to underline the ways in which this research contributes to our understanding of masculinities and conflict, it is perhaps worth being reminded of the gaps within existing scholarship. As has been noted within Chapters 1 and 2, there has been much theorising about masculinities and their enduring associations with warfare and violence (Ni Aoláin et al. 2011). Given the prominence of men within militarised groups (Cockburn 2001; Connell 2005), militarism has been almost universally linked to men and masculinity (Merry 2009), and war has been described as the “cornerstone of masculinity” (Skjelsbaek 2001: 61). It has also been recognised that strategies which seek to achieve demilitarisation and peace must also include strategies to bring about change in masculinities (Connell 2002).

However, while scholarship on gender and conflict has devoted much attention to understanding the experiences and identities of violent men, it has largely overlooked those defined as civilians (Foster 2011). As noted in Chapter 2, women and children continue to be thought of as civilians in a way that unarmed adult men are not (Carpenter 2006a). Moreover, while men of combat age are often the group most likely to be targeted for killing and other acts of repression (Jones 2004), international responses to conflict tend to suggest that battle age men are neither innocent nor vulnerable, whether combatants or not (Foster 2011).

Hence, as highlighted within Chapters 1 and 5, civilian men continue to remain largely invisible within scholarship, the media, and, indeed, within humanitarian policy and practice (Foster 2011; Hutchings 2011; Allsopp 2015). As Farrag (no date available) states, men who have lost their lives during conflict have often been represented as heroes, fighters or warriors, but rarely as victims. As noted within Chapter 2, our gendered understanding of conflict has, it seems, served to downplay male vulnerability to both psychological and physical abuse (Segal 2008). Moreover, while boys may be thought of as civilians, they may also, depending on their age, be thought of as men. The often-arbitrary nature of such judgements, however, may mean that boys are much more likely to be vulnerable to the effects of armed conflict as compared to their female counterparts (Carpenter 2006b).

Rethinking the gendered nature of warfare, therefore, means that we must also acknowledge the toll which violent conflict exerts upon men (Segal 2008), and recognise the realities, vulnerabilities, and complexities of their lives as civilians. As underlined within Chapters 1 and 2, while men's experiences and identities as civilians often go unexamined as they fall on the wrong side of the gendered peace and violence dichotomy (Moran 2010), there is a need to move beyond equating masculinities and conflict exclusively with violence and soldiering (McKeown and Sharoni 2002); and to recognise the extent to which the experience of vulnerability can have a profound effect upon the ways in which masculinities are enacted within conflicted societies (Dolan 2002; Foster 2011; Lwambo 2013; Wright 2014).

### 8.3 Case Selection

In light of this, this research has sought to further our understanding of the lives and identities of civilian men within two quite different conflict contexts, namely Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Relatively few studies of masculinity have been carried out within either of these settings (Harland and McCready 2014; Gokani et al. 2015), and thus the examination of one or the other could have proven fruitful in furthering our context-specific knowledge. As has been discussed within Chapter 3, examining Northern Ireland provided an opportunity to explore how protracted, internal conflict within a western, liberal, democratic setting had impacted upon civilian men and their masculinities. By Contrast, examining the Occupied Territories allowed for an exploration of how protracted conflict and military occupation had impacted upon the gendered identities of civilian men within a non-western, Middle Eastern context. However, while my work touched on such themes, and elucidated aspects of this analysis in both sites, the goal of my research was not to compare these cases but to explore masculinities and conflict beyond the specificity of one geographical location.

There is little doubt that these sites vary significantly in terms of time, space and the character of their respective conflicts. While Northern Ireland is in the process of emerging from violent conflict (Hamber and Gallagher 2014), violence and military occupation persist within the Occupied Territories (El Feki et al. 2017). While Northern Ireland has largely been demilitarised (Smyth 2004) (although peace walls and other “hidden barriers” remain) (Coyles et al. 2018: 1), spatial control, surveillance, and various forms of military architecture remain very much present within the Occupied Territories (see Parsons and Salter 2008; Weizman 2012). In addition, whereas Northern Ireland was a site of internal armed conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been extraordinarily internationalised, and personnel from international organisations such as the United Nations remain on the ground (see Amir 2014). Finally, while violent conflict has been limited within Western Europe in the post-World War Two era (Morrow et al. 2016), it has been an all too common feature of life in the Middle East in recent decades (see Sørli et al. 2005).

The demographics of the research participants also varied significantly depending on their site of recruitment. As noted within Chapter 6, virtually all of the participants

from Northern Ireland came from urban working-class areas, areas which had suffered disproportionately from the effects of social deprivation and conflict violence (Harland and McCready 2015). These participants were almost exclusively male and were at least forty years old at the time of interview.<sup>114</sup> By contrast, those recruited within the Occupied Territories were predominantly university students, and thus were often much younger and from relatively more privileged backgrounds than their Northern Irish counterparts. A significant number of women also contributed to the research within this setting, thus allowing for the incorporation of a female perspective on men, masculinities and violent conflict.

However, as noted within Chapter 3, there were also a number of similarities which existed between the conflict sites, if not the participants. Both conflicts, arguably, have their roots within settler-colonialism (Sharoni 2001; Tonge 2002; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a), and have been described as ethno-national in nature (McGarry and O’Leary 1995; Yiftachel 2002; Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008; Edwards and McGrattan 2010). Both can be characterised as protracted (Edwards and McGrattan 2010; McDonald 2010), low-intensity conflicts (Muldoon 2004; Catignani 2005) that have been confined to relatively small geographical areas (Ni Aoláin 2000; DellaPergola 2003). In addition, both conflicts have had a significant impact upon the civilian populations, with large numbers of civilian deaths relative to population size (Sutton 2001; Yiftachel 2002) and frequent interactions between members of the security forces and civilians (McVeigh 1994; Weizman 2012).

As noted above, however, the main purpose for the inclusion of both sites was to enable an exploration of the complexity of civilian masculinities in varied settings. Different manifestations of conflict are likely to affect men in different ways, and by exploring these quite different sites it was felt that the research could provide a more holistic understanding of the continuum of men’s conflict-related experiences. It was also felt that examining these sites *in tandem* could provide insights which would surpass those gained as a result of examining either site individually, in short, that they could inform our understanding of masculinities and conflict more broadly.

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<sup>114</sup> As noted within Chapter 3, one female participant from Northern Ireland also contributed to the research.

Moreover, the fact that both the conflict sites and the participants differed to a significant extent meant that the research had the potential to illustrate a range of conflict-related experiences and identities which similar sites or participants may not have been capable of doing. In this respect, therefore, the differences which exist between both the conflict sites and the participants can be viewed as a strength of the research, rather than as a limitation.

## **8.4 Common Findings**

### **8.4.1 Vulnerability**

This section will explore a number of themes which were broadly applicable to both sites. As a starting point, it seems necessary to highlight the extent to which the participants of both settings, all of whom were civilian and a significant majority of whom were male, were vulnerable to the effects of conflict violence. For example, as noted within previous chapters, ninety-one per cent of all those who lost their lives as a result of the Northern Irish conflict were male (Harland 2011), forty-eight per cent of whom were civilian (Sutton 2001). Moreover, as noted within Chapter 6, almost all of the Northern Irish participants had lived in areas which had been disproportionately affected by conflict violence and within which relatively large numbers of civilian men had lost their lives.

Similarly, men in the Occupied Territories have also lost their lives in relatively large numbers, which again highlights the gendered nature of conflict violence. As noted previously, ninety-four per cent of the 4,228 Palestinians who lost their lives as a result of the conflict between September 2000 and July 2007 were male (UNOCHA 2007),<sup>115</sup> as were 3,706 of the 5,512 who lost their lives between January 2008 and August 2019 (UNOCHA 2019b). In addition, the majority of Palestinians who lost their lives, both during the second intifada and in more recent times, have been civilian (Yiftachel 2002; UNOCHA 2019b).

While in recent years residents of Gaza have been particularly vulnerable to the perpetration of conflict-related violence within the Occupied Territories (see UNOCHA 2019b), the experience of vulnerability to such violence was nevertheless very much evident within the narratives of participants who hailed from either East

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<sup>115</sup> Of all those killed by the Israeli Security Forces during this period, fifty-nine per cent were thought to be civilian (UNOCHA 2007).

Jerusalem or the West Bank. Indeed, as noted within Chapter 7, many of the participants emphasised the need to continually exercise caution and vigilance, lest they fall victim to such violence.

However, it was apparent that the participants of both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories sought to utilise strategies, and/or engage in activities which could serve to both reduce their vulnerability to conflict violence and also support their masculine identities. In Northern Ireland, it seems that the participants primarily sought to achieve this through their pursuit of boxing, which offered a degree of protection from conflict violence and an enhanced masculine identity.

By contrast, within the Occupied Territories, it seems that the participants sought to achieve this by exercising caution and vigilance, which enhanced their safety and enabled them to utilise their masculinised knowledge of the conflict environment, and at a meta level through the pursuit of educational opportunities. Hence, as noted previously, while male vulnerability during conflict may remain “essentially unimaginable” (Myrntinen et al. 2017: 8); for both sets of participants it seems that vulnerability was central to both their experiences of conflict and the performance of their gender identities, as will be further discussed in the sections which follow.

#### **8.4.2 The Management of the Body**

The vulnerability to which the participants had been exposed was perhaps experienced most acutely at the physical level, i.e. at the level of the body. As highlighted in Chapter 2, while vulnerability has often been associated with victimhood and dependency, it is, in fact, a universal characteristic of the human condition (Fineman 2008), as all human bodies are fundamentally injurable and vulnerable (Segal 2008). For the participants of both sites, therefore, the management of their bodies appeared central to their strategies of navigating their respective conflict environments and reducing their inherent vulnerabilities. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 5, given its centrality to the construction of masculinity (Whitehead 2002; Connell 2005), the body also appeared to be central to the ways in which the participants sought to both construct and affirm their masculine identities within their respective environments. Examining its management can thus facilitate a better understanding of male identities within these conflict-affected settings.

As referenced in Chapter 5, Foucault has argued that power is contingent on the command of space and the control of bodies within that space (cited in Feldman 1991). Within both contexts under investigation, the spatial environment inhabited by civilians has also been constrained to a greater or lesser extent. As has been described in Chapter 3, freedom of movement within Northern Ireland was constrained by the construction of physical and other hidden barriers, the presence of police and military checkpoints, the imposition of curfews, and the religious segregation of housing and education (Tonge 2002; Campbell and Connelly 2003, 2006; Morrow et al. 2016; Coyles et al. 2018). Additionally, as noted in Chapters 5 and 7, freedom of movement within the Occupied Territories has been more systematically curtailed as a result of the separation barrier, Israeli security checkpoints, and the hugely restrictive permit regime (Weizman 2012; Kotef and Amir 2014; Bashi and Diamond 2015). For the participants of both sites therefore, navigating their respective conflict environments involved attempting to ensure the safety of their bodies within relatively confined and potentially dangerous spaces.

As underlined in Chapter 5, if we examine conflict through the lens of the body we can see that civilian protection is primarily concerned with the protection of vulnerable bodies. As suggested therein, the bodies of women, children and the elderly have often been thought to be those most in need of protection during such periods (Carpenter 2003; Slim 2008; Hirsch 2012). However, data from a range of conflict settings, including both Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine, indicate that male bodies, including those of adult men, are actually those most at risk of being exposed to conflict-related violence (Sutton 2001; Jones 2004; Wright 2014; UNOCHA 2019b). Hence, for the participants from both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories, the fact that their (male) bodies were comparatively strong and able appears to have been something of a liability, their bodies serving to increase their vulnerability to conflict violence rather than diminish it. Moreover, the fact that their bodies were not vulnerable according to the norms associated with the civilian protection regime meant that they had little recourse to its associated protections.

Within both of these conflict contexts, therefore, it seems that men were forced to explore other ways of reducing their bodily vulnerabilities. As highlighted within Chapter 7, male participants from the Occupied Territories were particularly aware of the precarious nature of their security and their need to remain continually

cautious and vigilant. In other words, they realised the necessity of keeping their relatively vulnerable bodies safe within relatively dangerous spaces. And as suggested above, it seems they sought to achieve this, at the micro level at least, primarily by drawing upon their (masculinised) knowledge of the conflict environment in order to enable them to exercise caution and vigilance to maximum effect.

As underlined within Chapter 7, from the point of view of the Israeli establishment it seems that every Palestinian body is viewed as a potential security threat (Korsten 2011). The Israeli surveillance and security regime, Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2015a) argues, aims to preserve control over Palestinian bodies, the workings of which are patently evident at Israeli security checkpoints (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009). From my own observations at the more formalised checkpoints, or terminals as they are often referred to, it seems that the soldiers stationed at these sites chiefly viewed their role in terms of managing the flow of Palestinian bodies, bodies which were often tightly packed together and spatially constrained. As one empties one's personal belongings and passes through the airport style security screener, the emphasis is on ensuring that the body being examined poses minimal threat to the state of Israel and thus can be permitted entry. While identity cards are also checked during this process, the assumption, nevertheless, remains that the threat posed by Palestinians emanates from their very bodies.

As suggested within Chapter 5, therefore, for Palestinians the checkpoint experience is very much an embodied experience (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009). As well as spatial confinement, waiting times at such sites can extend to several hours, with often little access to shelter, seating, toilets or other necessities (Keshet 2006). Moreover, checkpoints are also sites at which the threat of violence remains ever present (Hammami 2015), thus making it critical for Palestinians to manage their bodies in a manner which will maximise their chances of crossing swiftly and safely. They must, for example, ensure that they present their bodies in a timely and orderly manner at the various stages of the screening process, as failure to act according to expected protocol may result in serious bodily injury. They must also, as has been noted within Chapter 7, ensure that they are not carrying items such as knives, scissors, screwdrivers or even rulers, lest they are considered to be weapons (Focus Group 1, Interview with Anis; Field Notes, 25th October '16). In short, at such sites

they must attempt to ensure that their bodies are perceived to be “as non-threatening as f\*\*\*ing possible” (Interview with Hasan).

While managing one’s body in such a manner may help to ensure one’s safety at checkpoints, it could be argued that it is a strategy which is not conducive to affirming one’s masculine identity. As Whitehead (2002) contends, men are often expected to transcend space or place their bodies in aggressive motion within it, rather than to be rendered passive by their environment. It has also been argued that the invasion of personal space may also be read as a threat to masculinity (D’Cruze and Rao 2005). At such sites, therefore, the failure to transcend space, or to act aggressively within in, may be considered something of a betrayal of normative masculinity.

However, as was discussed within Chapter 7, in an environment characterised by pervasive insecurity, staying alive and avoiding arrest appear to have been, at least partially, recast as masculine responsibilities (see Interview with Yousef; Interview with Sami; Interview with Raed; Interview with Sahar). In this respect, therefore, while acting aggressively at the checkpoint may be considered more in keeping with traditional masculine norms, managing one’s body in order to help ensure that one remains capable of contributing to one’s family and society may, in fact, represent the attainment of a more culturally and socially valued form of masculinity. In addition, in the words of Anis, resisting at a checkpoint was just about “the stupidest thing you (could) do.” Hence in this sense, the careful management of the body, and the attainment of a culturally and socially valued form of masculinity, may not in fact be incompatible.

As suggested above, it also appears to be the case that the participants from Northern Ireland sought to manage their bodies in order to both protect themselves from the effects of conflict and affirm their masculinities. They sought to achieve these aims, it seems, primarily by managing their bodies in a manner which would enable them to be identified as boxers. As has been outlined within Chapter 6, many of the participants described how their pursuit of boxing had been their salvation, preventing them from either joining a paramilitary organisation or pursuing criminal activities; their involvement within the sport, seemingly, giving them permission to turn their backs on such activities. In addition, their status as boxers also appears to

have reduced the likelihood of them falling victim to political violence, with “paramilitaries on both sides of the divide” having apparently left those involved in boxing largely alone (Interview with James; Sugden1996).

The participants from the Occupied Territories appeared to have often managed their bodies in a manner which may have compromised their masculinities in the short term, in order to enable them to continue affirming them in long term. For instance, as noted above, it seems that these participants often had to accept their masculinities being compromised at checkpoints, or other sites of civilian-military interaction, in order to enable them to continue to live their lives and affirm them in other ways. However, it would appear that the participants from Northern Ireland were not required to make such a trade-off. As described in Chapter 6, their pursuit of boxing afforded these participants a degree of (masculine) “status” which they may otherwise not have been able to attain (Interview with Matthew; Interview with Harry). Their communities, it seems, often shared in the joy of their successes and were keen to both recognise and, indeed, celebrate their sporting contributions (see with Ciaran). Hence, while engaging in an activity which served to protect them from the effects of conflict, the participants could nevertheless enjoy the community visibility and social status associated with both hyper-masculinity and sporting success.<sup>116</sup>

However, in contrast to their counterparts in the Occupied Territories, participants from Northern Ireland were required to rigorously discipline their bodies in order to gain, and maintain, both the protection and status associated with being identified as boxers. As Woodward (2007) states, within boxing the body is both central and highly visible, the boxer being almost entirely identified with his (or her) body. Certainly, without subjecting the body to both dietary discipline and an intensive training regime, one could not hope to achieve or maintain a body capable of competing within the sport. Hence, for these participants, the protection and status

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<sup>116</sup> Moreover, as noted within Chapter 6, it appears that their participation in the sport enabled participants to attend training sessions or competitions in areas which would have been considered to be on the other side of the community divide (see Interview with Conor; Interview with Peter). Hence, it seems that this enabled the participants to transcend conflict space to a much greater extent than those not involved in the sport.

which they came to enjoy was intimately linked to and contingent upon, the rigorous management of their bodies.

Perhaps somewhat curiously, however, the participants of both sites largely failed to discuss or make reference to their bodies. Within Northern Ireland, for example, many spoke about the important fights they had had at various stages of their careers, and emphasised the (bodily) training and discipline which was necessary in order to compete at a high level within the sport. Rarely, however did they make reference to the physical injuries or bodily pains which must have affected all of them to varying degrees throughout their boxing careers. Thus, despite the fact that their bodies were central to their participation in the sport, and to the benefits associated with their status as boxers, the language of the body was nevertheless largely absent from their personal narratives.

Similarly, while all of the participants from the Occupied Territories had experience of navigating checkpoints and managing their bodies within conflict-affected spaces, very few of them made reference to the impact that such experiences had had upon them at the bodily level. While it could be argued that their bodies were less central to their identities as compared to their Northern Irish counterparts, they nevertheless appeared to spend much of their lives managing their bodies in the hope of avoiding bodily injuries. The fact that the participants of this context largely failed to make reference to their bodies also appears to be something of peculiarity.

Within both of these contexts therefore, and perhaps particularly so within Northern Ireland, bodies were both patently present and conspicuously absent. Such an absence may reflect the extent to which both societies remain religiously conservative and sexually repressive. Within these societies, it seems that noticing or talking about bodies remains something of a taboo, lest attention be drawn to these potentially shameful sexual objects. Moreover, perhaps to recognise the gendered nature of male bodies would be to recognise both their vulnerabilities and, indeed, the social and cultural power attached to them, which may thus call into the question the validity of such power. Hence within such contexts, it is perhaps in men's interests to overlook the gendered nature of both their bodies and the social and cultural power associated with them.

However, as has been shown in Chapter 5, while there have been numerous attempts within gendered scholarship to theorise the female body (Shildrick and Price 1999), it seems there have been fewer attempts to examine the “embodiedness” of men (Whitehead 2002: 181). Feminist scholarship, for example, has often regarded the female body either as something to be rejected in the search for equality, or as something to be celebrated as the essence of the feminine (Shildrick and Price 1999). By contrast, it seems the “ordered”, self-contained, male body has often been taken for granted, and thus not considered worthy of further examination (Shildrick and Price 1999: 3). Indeed, even within scholarship on masculinities, it is argued that the male body has been both “omnipresent yet relatively invisible” (Whitehead 2002: 181).

While it would appear that male embodiment and hierarchies of power have been more extensively explored beyond the confines of formal scholarship on gender and/or masculinities,<sup>117</sup> the extent to which the participants failed to make reference to their bodies may reflect how narratives of conflict have largely overlooked the (bodily) experiences of civilian men. Moreover, it may be reflective of how masculine dynamics dictate that men generally don’t talk about their bodies with other men. Going forward, then, it would appear to be most necessary for gender scholarship to examine male embodiment in more textured and analytically relevant ways, and to further consider how, in the midst of conflict, civilian men attempt to manage and preserve their (gendered) bodies. By doing so, there may also be much to gain in terms of understanding the management and affirmation of their civilian masculinities.

### **8.4.3 Masculine Resources and Civilian Men**

As noted in Chapter 2, it is argued that men do masculinity in a variety of ways, depending on the resources and strategies available within a given social setting (Connell 2000). As outlined therein, various scholars have argued that protracted conflict may limit the resources and strategies available for the attainment of normative masculinities as a result of factors such as militarisation, displacement, and the loss of livelihood (see Dolan 2002; Foster 2011; Lwambo 2013). However, as highlighted in Chapters 6 and 7, within conflict-affected contexts it would appear

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<sup>117</sup> See for example, Ta-Nehisi Coates’s *Between the World and Me*, and other literature on Black embodiment, racism, and police brutality in the United States.

that men continue to utilise the available masculine repertoire in order to support their status as men within their respective societies.

As underlined in Chapter 6, in the context of Northern Ireland the resources and strategies available to participants for the construction of their masculinities were profoundly shaped by their position within Northern Ireland's class hierarchy. As described therein, virtually all of the Northern Irish participants came from areas which were characterised not only by high levels of conflict violence, but also relative deprivation. Within such communities, the relative lack of employment or educational opportunities would have meant that there were fairly few resources available for the attainment of socially and culturally valued forms of civilian masculinity. However, given the esteem within which boxers were held within such communities, it appears that the participants recognised that through the pursuit of boxing, they could gain both a highly protective and valued form of masculine identity. Hence, in the relative absence of other resources, utilising their bodies to pursue the sport held the promise of both conflict protection and masculine affirmation.

By contrast, while the participants of the Occupied Territories had to carefully manage their bodies within conflict-affected spaces, it appears that they did not primarily utilise them in order to either seek protection from conflict or affirm their masculine identities. Indeed, given the precarious nature of their security and the efforts which many of them made in order to appear neither suspicious nor threatening, the attainment of a bodily identity perceived to be hyper-masculine may very well have increased, rather than decreased, their vulnerability to conflict violence. Moreover, given the asymmetries in power which existed between those occupying and those occupied, it may very well have been the case that a hyper-masculine identity based on bodily prowess would have been perceived to be of little relevance or utility to those in either group.

However, the comparatively more affluent participants of the Occupied Territories were not as constrained with regard to the resources available for the attainment of socially or culturally valued forms of civilian masculinity. In contrast to their counterparts in Northern Ireland who primarily relied on their bodies for such purposes, those in Occupied Territories had access to third level education, thus

increasing their chances of gaining a form of employment which would reflect their educational achievement. Admittedly, while many of the participants were not confident of securing such a form of employment within Palestine or, indeed, Israel, quite a few appeared to remain open-minded about pursuing their specialisms abroad. Hence, they were more privileged in the sense that their masculine identities were not as exposed to risks associated with bodily injury as compared to their Northern Irish counterparts.

Their educational attainment was thus a resource which the participants from the Occupied Territories could utilise in order to both affirm a certain type of masculinity and to seek protection from the effects of conflict. As has been noted in Chapter 7, many of the participants, both male and female, made reference to educational attainment as a marker of masculinity. The participants believed that a high level of education would lead to enhanced opportunities for both employment and income, and would help to ensure that they possessed the skills necessary to make a contribution to Palestinian society. Moreover, it appears that the attainment of a high level of education also had the potential to protect them from the effects of conflict to a certain extent, with participants describing, for example, how their legal knowledge served to reduce their vulnerability during checkpoint interactions, or how their employment status enabled them to cross such sites with greater ease (Interview with Raed; Interview with Mohsen; Field Notes, 25<sup>th</sup> October '16).

Although not strictly linked to access to further education, a significant number of participants also appeared to utilise their language abilities in order to both affirm their masculinities and to enable them to more effectively navigate the conflict environment. In particular, and as has been highlighted within Chapter 7, the ability to speak Hebrew was said to be both highly advantageous and indeed a marker of masculinity - something which successful Palestinian men should have mastery over (Interview with Rashida; Interview with Raed; Interview with Sahar). Participants, for instance, described how their ability to speak or understand Hebrew reduced their vulnerability to abuse or mistreatment at Israeli checkpoints (Interview with Anis; Interview with Rashida). Moreover, the ability to speak Hebrew was also said to open up the possibility of securing employment within Israel, which could thus

help to ensure that one could fulfil one's role as a masculine provider (Interview with Rashida).<sup>118</sup>

In addition, as has been described within Chapter 7, the participants also utilised their knowledge of the conflict environment in order to achieve these objectives. For example, when asked which qualities men in this context should possess, participants responded by suggesting that they should be “street smart” (Interview with Fatima), “aware” of “things” (Interview with Ghada), and “know what they are doing when it comes to the occupation” (Focus Group 2). As previously noted, this form of knowledge was closely linked to the necessity of continually exercising caution and vigilance, in order to ensure that one maximised one's safety whilst negotiating the conflict environment. Moreover, given the more public nature of men's responsibilities (Mackenzie and Foster 2017), it appears that, the male participants at least, felt that the acquisition and utilisation of such knowledge was both a masculine responsibility and a marker of masculinity.

While their resources and strategies, therefore, varied significantly, the participants of both contexts appeared to utilise those which remained at their disposal in order to both seek protection from the effects of conflict and to affirm their masculine identities. While the Northern Irish participants primarily utilised the cultural capital associated within their bodies, those from the Occupied Territories utilised the benefits associated with educational attainment, language ability, and knowledge of the conflict environment; in short, the cultural capital associated with their brains.<sup>119</sup> However, it must be noted that within boxing strategy and tactical nous are also highly necessary, and thus the use of one's brain as well as one's body is of critical importance. Moreover, the participants from Occupied Territories ultimately utilised their brains in order to protect their bodies from the effects of conflict violence. Hence, whilst recognising the respective strategies and resources utilised by the participants, it is also important not to reinforce the mind-body dualism found within some strands of scholarship (Gill et al. 2005).

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<sup>118</sup> The ability to speak English also appeared to provide similar advantages in terms of reduced vulnerability and increase employment opportunities (Interview with Raed; Interview with Rashida), although this was referenced much less frequently by participants.

<sup>119</sup> As is further discussed below, the pooling of family resources also appeared to enable men to reach markers of masculinity such as marriage and to ensure provision for their families. In this sense, familial cooperation was also a resource which men could utilise in order to affirm masculinities and limit the effects of conflict.

To conclude, therefore, even in situations of conflict it would appear that men utilise the resources at their disposal with which to construct and affirm their masculine identities, thus underscoring the value of examining the continuum of men's conflict-related experiences in diverse settings. While this may involve resorting to the use of conflict-related violence, the participants of this study instead sought to find socially and culturally desirable ways of doing masculinity whilst retaining their status as civilians. In fact, as the mainstream literature tends to suggest, while a period of conflict may be an opportune time to affirm one's masculinity through violence (Friðriksdóttir 2018), resources and strategies are nevertheless likely to remain available for the affirmation of civilian forms of masculinity.

#### **8.4.4 Socially and Culturally Valued Civilian Masculinities**

The findings show that during conflict men utilise the resources at their disposal in order to construct various forms of masculinity beyond those based on the perpetration of conflict-related violence. Moreover, it would appear that such forms are often regarded at least as authentic, or socially and culturally valued, as their militarised variants. As has been discussed within Chapter 6 for example, prior to the outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, Belfast was said to have had a rich tradition of "hard" men, working-class men who engaged in bare-knuckled street fights and gained notoriety for doing so (Feldman 1991: 52). Such communities thus had a history of culturally exalting men who were "able to handle" themselves without resorting to the use of weapons (Interview with Harry).

This history may thus help to explain why those identified as boxers appeared to enjoy a relatively high level of social status both within their own communities, and, indeed, across the community/religious divide. As one participant explained, working-class communities on both sides of the divide "understood what it was to be a man, what it took to get into a ring" (Interview with Harry), their bravery as men thus facilitating their acceptance beyond the confines of their own community. Such was the esteem in which they were held, it was perhaps the case that within such

communities they were regarded as more authentically masculine, or were more socially and culturally valued, than their militarised counterparts.<sup>120</sup>

Similarly, as underlined within Chapter 7, in the context of the Occupied Territories it seems that the masculinities of older Palestinians were often regarded (by Palestinians at least) as more authentic than those of the young Israeli soldiers stationed at checkpoints. The participants, for instance, appeared to be particularly offended by the ways in which older Palestinian men were sometimes treated by young soldiers at these sites, the behaviour of the latter group failing to show the respect which the participants felt the former group deserved. Moreover, the age gap which existed between the groups, and the fact that the soldiers were virtually all-powerful at these sites, meant that the injustices suffered by older Palestinian men were considered to be all the greater.<sup>121</sup>

In reading this through a gendered lens, it would appear that the participants were attempting to emphasise that such injustices were particularly abhorrent given the discrepancies which existed between the masculinities of the respective groups. While older Palestinian men were thought to have proven their masculine credentials through, for example, fathering, grandfathering, or their endurance of the occupation, their armed Israeli counterparts were, by contrast, young, naïve, and relatively unfamiliar with the demands associated with raising and supporting a family. Their power thus derived almost exclusively from their militarised identities rather than from the authenticity of their masculinities.

The young Israeli soldiers, therefore, were not only disrespecting those within Palestinian society who were towards the top of the masculine hierarchy, they were doing so from a place of profound illegitimacy. Moreover, in (implicitly) critiquing their masculine identities, it appears that the participants were also offering a critique of their moral integrity; perhaps suggesting that what while the soldiers exercised militarised authority at checkpoints, they ultimately lacked moral authority. It is worth noting, however, that the participants had no interest in

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<sup>120</sup> Ashe (2012: 240) has also noted how, during the conflict in Northern Ireland, some civilian men framed their armed counterparts as “far from hard”, arguing that their power was dependent upon the militarised structures of their organisations.

<sup>121</sup> Indeed, when several of the participants spoke about the injustices suffered by older Palestinian men at checkpoints, they were careful to emphasise the age gap which existed between such men and the young Israeli soldiers (see Focus Group 1; Focus Group 2; Interview with Hasan).

upholding the legitimacy of the masculinised power of Israeli soldiers, and thus their critiques are not without bias.

Thus, within both contexts, it seems that masculine identities continued to exist which were characterised by an authenticity beyond the veneer of militarism. The ability to persist in the face of adversity, through for example the pursuit of boxing or the endurance of military occupation, was perhaps perceived as a more significant signifier of masculinity than simply the ability to participate in a militarised group. As has been noted in Chapter 2, hegemonic masculinity has often been conflated with violent or militarised masculinity (Kunz et al. 2018). However, while those who embody militarised masculinities may wield considerable power during periods of conflict, the data would suggest that the extent to which such identities are in fact hegemonic, or are socially and culturally valued, remains questionable (Myrntinen et al. 2017; Friðriksdóttir 2018; Kunz et al. 2018).

## **8.5 Context-Specific Findings**

### **8.5.1 Protection and Civilian Men**

This section will explore the themes which, although not entirely context-specific, were primarily of relevance to one site in particular. To begin, I examine the ways in which the participants, as civilian men, sought protection from the effects of conflict, a finding which was particularly evident in the data collected within Northern Ireland. Within this context, boxing appeared to play a highly protective role in the lives of participants. As underlined in Chapter 6, many of them reported how the sport had saved them from the dangers associated with pursuing political violence or criminality. In addition, their status as boxers appeared to afford them a degree of protection from the violence which paramilitary groups may otherwise have inflicted upon them; their boxing identities seemingly serving to locate them outside of the conflict to a certain extent. Hence, it seems that identifying, and indeed being identified as a boxer, was perhaps one of the most protective forms of civilian identity open to young men from working-class areas during the conflict period.

As described in Chapter 6, in terms of protection from conflict participation it seems that the pursuit of the sport provided the participants with a degree of masculine status which they did not have to pursue through armed violence (see Interview with

Matthew; Interview with Maurice; Interview with Harry). That these masculine actors were seen to be contributing to their communities through their boxing endeavours appeared to reduce societal expectations that they should make a contribution through politically violent means; thus enabling them to “identify” with something “outside of the Troubles” (Interview with Harry). Hence, the pursuit of the sport appeared to protect participants from conflict participation by enabling them to pursue socially and culturally valued civilian identities which were nevertheless considered to be quintessentially masculine.

In addition, as has been noted in Chapter 6, in terms of being protected from the effects of conflict-related violence many of the participants described how their boxing clubs had been places of refuge; protected spaces within which they felt safe both physically and emotionally (see Interview with James; Interview with Robert; Interview with Gavin; Interview with John; Interview with Harry). They were also overwhelmingly masculine spaces, spaces within which tough young men honed their combat skills under the tutelage of veteran pugilists. Their status as protected spaces free from paramilitary interference appears to have been due, in part at least, to the perception that such clubs were run by hyper-masculine actors implementing masculine regimes which were similar to those to be found within paramilitary organisations. This perception seemingly helped to ensure that such spaces were free from the interference of masculine regimes of a more militarised variety. Moreover, beyond the refuge to be found within the physical confines of their boxing clubs, their status as boxers helped to ensure that the participants were largely left alone by paramilitaries on both sides of the community/religious divide (see Interview with James; Interview with Conor; Interview with Peter); their hyper-masculine identities serving to protect, rather than expose them, to the effects of conflict-related violence.

It was also apparent that many of the participants were very grateful for the protective role that the sport had played in their lives. This was evident in the ways in which the participants described their respective boxing clubs as spaces of safety and refuge; spaces which they were drawn to, and motivated to remain within. In addition, as discussed within Chapter 6, the ways in which the participants described the salvation which they found within the sport would also indicate that they were

most appreciative of the sports protective function;<sup>122</sup> without which their exposure to conflict violence would have undoubtedly increased.

By contrast, as has been noted in Chapter 7, while the participants from the Occupied Territories were aware of their vulnerability to conflict violence, there appeared to be a paucity of spaces which they considered to be safe. Military incursions within both public and private spaces meant that not even their homes or places of study were considered places of refuge (Interview with Emad; Interview with Sayed. In response, male participants in particular emphasised the extent to which they felt compelled to remain in a constant state of vigilance. To a significant extent, this involved exercising caution and behaving in a manner which would not be perceived as threatening in the eyes of the Israeli security forces. The participants, therefore, attempted to ensure that their behaviour rendered the spaces around them to be as safe as possible, regardless of the dangers inherent within such spaces. Thus, in contrast to their counterparts from Northern Ireland, the participants from the Occupied Territories appeared to be of the belief that hyper-vigilance, rather than hyper-masculinity, would best serve them in their efforts to avoid falling victim to conflict-related violence.

The data collected from both of these sites would thus suggest that while their protection needs are often overlooked (Carpenter 2006a; Hirsch 2012), civilian men also seek (and, indeed, require) protection from conflict-related violence and spaces of physical and emotional safety. As has been noted previously, given that it is often men (including civilian men) who are specifically targeted for killings and other actions of repression (Jones 2004; Wright 2014), one could argue that they may, in fact, require greater levels of protection than those often thought to be particularly vulnerable. Hence, as argued by Hirsch (2012), it is important that those working to promote adherence to international law recognise the intersectional nature of civilian identities and their attendant vulnerabilities. It would also appear that the ways in which men seek to protect themselves from the effects of conflict can have a significant influence on how they seek to construct and affirm their masculinities. Paying greater attention to both their protection requirements and masculine

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<sup>122</sup> Several of the participants also spoke of how fortunate or “blessed” they felt for having had the opportunity to participate in the sport during the period (see Interview with James; Interview with Conor; Interview with Jason).

identities would thus appear to be imperative if we are to engage more holistically with the complexities of violent conflict.

### **8.5.2 Masculine Bonds and Friendships**

Another significant theme which emerged primarily from the data collected within Northern Ireland concerned the role which masculine bonds and friendships can play during periods of violent conflict. As highlighted in Chapter 6, while such bonds and friendships have been recognised as important to the performance of masculine identities (Migliaccio 2009), scholarship appears to have largely overlooked their significance during violent conflict; and certainly gendered scholarship has failed to explore their significance in relation to civilian men. It thus appears that there is an assumption within the literature that men do not require the emotional support associated with masculine bonds during such periods. However, from the data which emerged from Northern Ireland it was clear that such bonds and friendships had played protective and life affirming roles in the lives of the participants, providing, amongst other things, much needed emotional support to those living within communities suffering disproportionately from the effects of conflict violence and social deprivation.

The bonds which the participants formed with their former boxing coaches appeared to be particularly important in terms of the provision of emotional support. As noted within Chapter 6, they often referred to such figures in brotherly, fatherly, and even messianic terms, and spoke glowingly of the many roles that such figures had played as they attempted to guide and nurture those under their tutelage (Interview with James; Interview with Matthew; Interview with Jason). Moreover, it appears that such figures often modelled forms of masculinity which one might associate with positive or “mature” fatherhood (Gokani et al. 2015: 213), such as care, compassion and respect, thus familiarising the participants with forms of manhood which, although ruggedly masculine, were nevertheless very different to those associated with social violence or militarism.

Many of the participants also spoke about how their participation within the sport had enabled them to form friendships with those on the other side of the community/religious divide. The formation of such friendships appeared to enable the participants to challenge their (potential) prejudices and, ultimately, to humanise

those previously deemed to be others. Such friendships, it seems, were often deeply held and valued, with several participants referring to the boxing fraternity in Northern Ireland as a “family” (Interview with Matthew; Interview with Jason; Interview with Maurice).

Hence, even in the midst of conflict, community/religious differences were insufficient to hinder the formation of male friendships, masculine bonds proving stronger than sectarian divisions. While the transcendence of class or ethnic barriers has been noted among soldiers during warfare, as evidenced, for instance, by the term band of brothers, it nevertheless remains the case that, as noted above, the bonds which exist among civilian men during violent conflict remain largely unexplored. Thus, examining the bonds and friendships that were present within the boxing fraternity in Northern Ireland sheds light on their ability to, at least partially, transcend other markers of identity among civilian populations during such periods.

The nature of the research within the Occupied Territories did not lend itself to the exploration of masculine bonds and friendships within a sporting or institutional context. Nevertheless, there was some evidence that such bonds and friendship also play an important part in assisting civilian men to cope with the challenges associated with conflict and occupation. For example, some of the more traditional coffee shops within the Occupied Territories appeared to be frequented almost exclusively by men, and thus were predominantly masculine spaces where bonds could be formed and emotional support given and received.

As discussed in Chapter 7, the pooling of economic resources is a way in which Palestinian families cope with the financial difficulties associated with conflict and occupation (Kuttab 2006). This form of cooperation may also serve to strengthen the masculine bonds that exist within Palestinian families, and to act as a bulwark against emotional distress or any masculine shame associated with an inability to adequately provide. The pooling of economic resources for the purposes of marriage, for example, was said to relieve the groom of sole financial responsibility for the costs associated with the event (Focus Group 1), and also ensured that those who wished to reach this marker of masculinity had the opportunity to do so (Peteeet 1994).

In addition, participants spoke about how they would share information with their friends, via Facebook for instance, to enable them to travel to work or school as efficiently as possible in light of the challenges associated with crossing Israeli checkpoints, thus potentially helping them to avoid the danger and humiliations associated with particularly tense checkpoint interactions. In addition, as noted in Chapter 7, Yasser even advised his male students to wear boxer shorts rather than briefs so as to help ensure that any potential humiliation associated with strip search at such sites might be reduced (Field Notes, 25<sup>th</sup> October '16). To conclude, therefore, within both contexts it would appear that masculine bonds and friendship were utilised in order to mitigate against the effects of conflict, reduce emotional distress, and support men's masculine identities.

### **8.5.3 Caution and Vigilance**

When one thinks of masculinities and conflict, one may almost automatically think of militarised or hegemonic masculinities which, as underlined within Chapter 2, are often associated with characteristics such as aggression, dominance, bravery and risk-taking (Barrett 2001; Clarke 2008; Langa and Eagle 2008). By contrast, and as highlighted within Chapter 7, it was apparent that exercising caution and vigilance was a key masculine responsibility within the Occupied Territories. Given the dangers inherent there, participants were of the belief that it was necessary to act with vigilance and caution in order to shield themselves from the effects of violence, a finding which is likely to have resonance in many conflict-affected contexts. To do so, however, participants appeared to suggest that both skill and knowledge of the (public) conflict environment were necessary, thus aiding their acceptance as desirable masculine attributes within this context.

While all of us must exercise a degree of caution and vigilance in our daily lives in order to remain safe within our respective environments, it would appear that such a necessity has rarely been linked to the construction of masculinity. Although some literature has identified the extent to which men often feel the need to remain vigilant whilst performing their masculinities (Ducat 2004; Evans and Wallace 2008;), it seems that few scholars have identified the degree to which exercising caution and vigilance may assist with the construction or affirmation of masculine identities.

Certainly, literature on masculinities and conflict appears to have neglected such an examination, which is perhaps somewhat surprising given that the need to exercise caution and vigilance would appear to be particularly critical during such periods.<sup>123</sup> Such an oversight is also somewhat curious given that the protection of one's family is often considered a primary masculine responsibility (Safilos-Rothschild 2000; Porter 2013; Friðriksdóttir 2018), the accomplishment of which surely requires regularly exercising caution and vigilance and instructing of one's family to do likewise.

It is perhaps somewhat revealing that the paucity of literature which does examine masculinities, caution/vigilance, and the construction of masculinity is located within scholarship on men's health. Gannon et al. (2010), for instance, discuss the ways in which their interviewees, men recovering from prostate cancer, had a newfound sense of vulnerability which led them to exercise caution and vigilance in terms of caring for their bodies. Similarly, Robertson (2006) noted how the male participants of his study became increasingly vigilant regarding the care of their bodies when faced with illness or physical impairment.

That the exercising of vigilance and caution among men has been previously recognised with regard to the vulnerability of male bodies would thus appear to confirm the extent to which the participants of the Occupied Territories considered their bodies to be both vulnerable and at (continual) risk. Like the participants of the aforementioned studies, therefore, they too deemed caution and vigilance to be necessary in order to minimise the risk of (further) bodily impairment, impairment which (as discussed within Chapter 5) may have a significant impact upon one's ability to perform masculinity in a culturally exalted manner (Connell 2005; Gill et al. 2005; Lwambo 2013).

Within the context of the Occupied Territories, it appears that a number of factors served to legitimise risk aversion, rather than risk-taking, as a legitimate masculine characteristic. Firstly, avoiding arrest and even death appears to have become something of a masculine duty within this context, and in order to achieve this, a significant level of caution and vigilance were deemed necessary. Secondly, it seems

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<sup>123</sup> Indeed, during periods of conflict it would appear that both civilians and combatants have reason to exercise caution and vigilance in order to protect themselves from violence, and/or carry out their military objectives as effectively as possible.

that the exercising of caution and vigilance enabled the participants to rely on their own resources and take responsibility for their own welfare, thus utilising their experiences of vulnerability to perform self-reliant forms of masculinity.<sup>124</sup> Thirdly, as suggested above, the exercising of caution and vigilance was closely linked to knowledge of the conflict environment, in that the more knowledgeable one was in this respect, the more effectively one could exercise caution and vigilance. This enabled men to show their masculine competence in matters relating to safety within the public sphere, perhaps, as suggested within Chapter 7, to the detriment of the agency of women.

While the necessity of exercising caution and vigilance was much more evident in the data which emerged from the Occupied Territories, the management of risk and the utilisation of knowledge and skill in order to minimise physical injury was also of critical importance to the participants from Northern Ireland. For example, while placing oneself in harm's way is undoubtedly unavoidable for those who enter the boxing ring, there is also a strong incentive to act with due care in order to limit the extent to which one's opponent can inflict harm. In addition, boxing is a highly disciplined sport governed by clear rules of engagement which seek to limit the risks to which competitors are exposed, and hence caution and vigilance are perhaps as integral to the sport as risk-taking or aggression.

Perhaps more significantly, however, while the participants from Northern Ireland had chosen to place themselves at risk of injury within the boxing ring, it seems that their endeavours served to protect them from the effects of conflict outside the ring so to speak. In this respect, therefore, their pursuit of boxing can be interpreted as an act of caution and self-preservation, rather than one of reckless risk-taking. As described within Chapter 6, it appears that the mothers of participants often took a similar view, and were comforted by the knowledge that their sons were relatively safe within their respective boxing clubs rather than roaming the streets (Interview with Conor; Interview with Andrew; Interview with Harry). Hence, while supporting one's son in the pursuit of a relatively dangerous sport may be considered somewhat reckless, it may also be considered a pragmatic attempt to shelter them from the

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<sup>124</sup> In their research Gannon et al. (2010) also noted how exercising of caution and vigilance enabled their participants to assume greater responsibility for their own welfare and, hence, to enact forms of masculinity based on self-reliance.

potentially fatal effects of violent conflict, and thus as an act of caution and vigilance. Furthermore, while strategies may vary according to cultural context, it is surely the case that during periods of armed conflict many parents attempt to protect their sons and daughters from lethal violence by any possible means.

#### **8.5.4 The Relevance of Civilian Status**

As stated in Chapter 5, the principle of distinction aims to differentiate between members of armed groups directly participating in hostilities, and civilians not directly participating in hostilities (Melzer 2009), with international actors agreeing that the latter should be protected from the effects of armed conflict (Carpenter 2006a; Hartigan 2010). However, while civilians may be afforded a significant level of protection under international law, in practice it is often extremely difficult to distinguish between armed actors and their civilian counterparts, particularly in situations of internal armed conflict (Slim 2008). Despite legal protections, therefore, civilians often remain woefully exposed to the effects of armed conflict, as is evidenced by the large numbers of civilian deaths which continue to be recorded around the globe (UN Secretary General 2018). Moreover, as Hirsch (2012) notes, men often find it particularly difficult to credibly assert their status as civilians, and thus to benefit from the civilian protection regime, as the male body is often presumed combatant or militarised. This, in turn, has profound implications in terms of the identities of civilian men, identities which, as noted previously, are to a significant extent shaped by their experiences of vulnerability during conflict.

Although the lives of the Northern Irish participants were shaped to a significant extent by violent conflict, it was those from the Occupied Territories who appeared to particularly struggle with their status and identities as civilians. As noted in Chapter 7, while the Fourth Geneva Convention aims to minimise the effect of war on civilian populations, since the inception of the occupation in 1967 Israel has consistently violated almost all of its provisions (Imseis 2003).<sup>125</sup> In addition, increased restrictions on the freedom of movement in recent decades, which is in itself a fundamental right (Franklin 2013), has impaired the ability of Palestinians to exercise a host of other rights including the right to earn a living, the right to education, the right to access healthcare, and the right to family life (Shatou 2009;

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<sup>125</sup> The Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) defines international law in relation to belligerent occupation (Weizman 2012).

Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2010; Human Rights Watch 2019). As a number of participants opined, the pervasiveness of conflict and occupation, was, therefore, impossible to ignore (Interview with Emad; Focus Group 2).

It was thus clear that within this context one's status as a civilian offered very limited protection from the effects of conflict. The belief that every Palestinian living within the Occupied Territories represents a possible security threat means that, from the point of view of the Israeli state, the "hypercriminalized" Palestinian requires continual surveillance and control (Korsten 2011; Peteet 2017: 21).<sup>126</sup> This, in turn, renders Palestinians vulnerable to the militarised power of the Israeli security forces, with men in particular likely to become victims of state violence, an experience with which those from "suspect" communities in a variety of contexts are likely to be familiar (Hillyard 1993: 258; Breen-Smyth 2014).<sup>127</sup> Regardless of their conflict status therefore, it seems that Palestinians cannot depend upon the civilian ethic to protect them, but instead must find other ways of minimising the dangers inherent within the conflict environment.

In light of this, it seems that some of the participants realised that they could draw more effectively upon other markers of their identity, as opposed to civilian identity, in order to reduce their vulnerability to conflict violence. For instance, as noted in Chapter 7, a number of participants described how their ability to communicate in Hebrew reduced their vulnerability to mistreatment and abuse at Israeli checkpoints (Interview with Anis; Interview with Rashida; Interview with Ghada). Their ability to speak in Hebrew enabled them to gain a measure of "respect" from Israeli soldiers (Interview with Sami; Interview with Ghada), and helped to ensure that such interactions were both a little safer and a little "less unfriendly" (Interview with Rashida; Interview with Hasan). Speaking Hebrew seemingly enabled the soldiers to recognise the humanity of the participants, as they were literally speaking their language, whilst also aiding the participants in their efforts to "know" their "enemy" (Interview with Rashida; Khaleej Times 2015).

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<sup>126</sup> Indeed, Peteet (2017: 21) argues that the term "terrorist" is often used generically to refer to Palestinians.

<sup>127</sup> Hillyard (1993) first coined the term "suspect community" to describe the experience of the Irish community in Britain during the Troubles. More recently parallels have been drawn between their experience and those of the Muslim community in Britain and elsewhere (Breen-Smyth 2014).

A number of participants also felt that a higher social status had the potential to be beneficial during interactions with Israeli soldiers (Field Notes 25<sup>th</sup> October '16; Interview with Mohsen), with one participant expressing the view that crossing checkpoints was “easier” when one was “wearing a suit” (Interview with Hasan). Markers of identity, therefore, such as language ability and/or social status, seemingly afforded the participants greater respect during such interactions than references to their status as civilians were likely to achieve. Utilising these facets of their identities thus proved to be more effective in reducing their vulnerability to conflict-related violence than relying upon the soldiers to adhere to the norms of international law. Drawing upon these markers of identity may, consequently, be considered acts of caution and vigilance, acts which nevertheless allowed the participants to utilise their knowledge and status in a subversive manner in order to more effectively navigate the conflict environment.

As underlined in Chapter 7, many of the participants appeared to struggle with their civilian identities, as these identities had largely failed to protect them from the effects of armed conflict or capture the reality of their lives under military occupation. Participants, for example, reported that they did not “feel” like civilians (Interview with Rashida), or at least not “real” civilians (Interview with Anis; Interview with Lila) who could freely practice their basic human rights (Interview with Anis; Interview with Lila; Interview with Reem). Indeed, given the extent to which the security needs of the Israeli state had taken precedence within the Occupied Territories, a number of the participants appeared to reject their status as civilians, arguing that those living within a “giant” or open air prison could not in fact be classified in such a manner (Interview with Anis; Interview with Lila).<sup>128</sup>

Evidently, there was a degree of pushback from participants against this form of categorisation. While the majority of participants did not entirely reject their civilian identities or their right to be classified in this manner, it seems that their rights had been violated so systematically that the relevance of this form of identity had been significantly diminished in their eyes. This pushback may also have been due in part to the international or universal nature of civilian identity; i.e. it as a form of identity

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<sup>128</sup> While at one point in the interview Lila suggested that those living within the Occupied Territories could not be considered “real” civilians, at others points she appeared to reject the notion that those living within this context could be considered civilians at all.

which applies beyond the confines of national or regional borders. As a consequence, participants may have regarded their civilian identities as somewhat secondary or peripheral to their national or gender or class-based identities. On a global level, it would appear that civilian identity is often not fully internalised even by those living within conflict zones who have a vested interest in upholding civilian protection, as evidenced by the relative lack of mobilisation around this form of identity.

It was also suggested that Palestinians had been largely abandoned by the international community and misrepresented within the international media (Interview with Sayed), a media which had often failed to understand or articulate their aspirations and which frequently portrayed them as “terrorists” rather than as people (Interview with Sami; Interview with Anis). By contrast, it was argued that Israel had largely succeeded in hiding the realities of the occupation and presenting a human face to the world (Interview with Raed; Interview with Hasan), meaning that international support for the Israeli state continued unabated (Interview with Sayed). Pushback against their civilian identities, therefore, may also have represented something of a rejection of both international values and the international community, the latter having not only failed to deliver positive change for Palestinians but which also appeared complicit in their emasculation and the incessant undermining of their human dignity.<sup>129</sup>

While the conflict in Northern Ireland did not involve military occupation and violations of the rights of the civilian population were arguably less systematic, high levels of militarisation characterised the early stages of the conflict (Ni Aoláin 2000), and a significant military presence remained in areas such as north and west Belfast and Derry City (i.e. the areas where almost all of the participants resided) through the entirety of the conflict. Consequently, when participants spoke of their memories of the period, the precarious nature of the lives of civilians within these areas became apparent. Also striking was the extent to which participants normalised, and even became desensitised to, the violence occurring within their communities. Participants, for instance, recalled how they became “oblivious” (Interview with Matthew) or even “immune” (Interview with Harry) to conflict

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<sup>129</sup> Indeed, Raed was of the opinion that not only Palestine, but the whole of the Arab world had been emasculated.

violence, with troubling experiences fading quickly from memory like “water off a duck’s back” (Interview with Ryan). It was thus clear that while the participants may have remained civilian, the conflict was both as real and potentially consequential for them (as civilian men) as it was for their militarised counterparts.

Within this context it, was also the case that the civilian protection regime was found wanting in terms of adequately protecting the civilian population, particularly civilian men. As was noted in Chapter 5, more than fifty per cent of all those who lost their lives during the conflict were civilian, the overwhelming majority of whom were male (Sutton 2001). Moreover, as highlighted in Chapter 6, almost all of those who participated in the study came from areas of Northern Ireland which had been disproportionately affected by conflict violence. In north and west Belfast for example, i.e. the areas within which the majority of participants resided during the period, civilians accounted for (almost) sixty-eight per cent and fifty-five per cent of all conflict-related deaths respectively (Sutton 2001). Hence, as males living within these areas, their status as civilians clearly afforded them little protection from the (gendered) effects of conflict-related violence.

Given, therefore, the substantial loss of civilian life during the period, the majority of which can be attributed to paramilitary groups (Sutton 2001),<sup>130</sup> it is clear that the principle of distinction was often treated with scant regard. As a result, the Northern Irish participants, like their counterparts from the Occupied Territories, could not merely rely upon their status as civilians to protect them from the effects of conflict-related violence. However, in a manner similar to ways in which those from the Occupied Territories gained a measure of “respect” and safety during their interactions with Israeli soldiers (i.e. through their language ability/social status), it seems that those from Northern Ireland utilised their status as boxers to gain the respect of, and thus protection from, those active within paramilitary groups.

As stated in Chapter 6, chivalric codes, which regulated both warfare and sporting tournaments in medieval times (Moelker and Kümmel 2007), also contributed to the formulation of both the Marquess of Queensbury Rules and the codification of the laws of war (Murphy and Sheard 2006; Rubin 2011). During the conflict in Northern

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<sup>130</sup> Of the 1840 civilian deaths during the period, loyalist paramilitaries were responsible for 878 deaths while their republican counterparts were responsible for 721 deaths. By contrast, British security forces were responsible for 186 civilian deaths (Sutton 2001).

Ireland, I have suggested that the continued influence of these shared masculine codes and values within both the boxing fraternity and paramilitary organisations helped to ensure that those involved in the sport would not be targeted by paramilitary members. Such shared values, it seems, helped to foster respect for participants among paramilitaries, their identities as boxers rather than as civilians ultimately serving to protect them from paramilitary violence.

Consequently, for the participants of both contexts it would appear that it was aspects of their identities which reflected their social status or standing, rather than merely their status as civilians, which enabled them to gain a measure of respect among militarised actors and a degree of protection from militarised violence. Moreover, as such dynamics are likely to play out in a range of conflict-affected settings, it again highlights the importance of assessing the needs and identities of civilians in an intersectional manner (as suggested by Hirsch 2012), thereby helping to ensure that all those who can legitimately claim civilian identity are adequately protected from the effects of conflict-related violence (Hirsch 2012).

## **8.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored how the findings from both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories can contribute to our understanding of civilian masculinities and conflict, both within these settings and within conflicted societies more broadly. In relation to the aforementioned sites, it has drawn attention to the commonalities and points of departure in terms of the respective conflict environments as well as the experiences and identities of participants. It has also explored several themes which were broadly applicable to both of these sites, namely, male vulnerability, the management of the body, masculine resources and civilian men, and socially and culturally valued civilian masculinities.

Moreover, the chapter has examined a number of themes which were principally relevant to one site in particular, but which nevertheless had resonance within both. With regard to Northern Ireland, the themes explored included civilian men and protection, and masculine bonds and friendships, while the exercising of caution and vigilance and the precarious relevance of civilian status were those explored primarily in reference to the Occupied Territories. Within both of these settings, therefore, masculinities and conflict have been explored in relatively novel ways

which may make a notable contribution to our knowledge of civilian masculinities within these societies.

In addition, the chapter has sought to highlight how the themes explored herein are likely to be pertinent to a range of conflict-affected settings beyond the confines of either Northern Ireland or the Occupied Territories. It is argued, therefore, that their exploration may facilitate the mapping of conflict space, identities, and civilian needs and vulnerabilities in new and meaningful ways in a variety of conflict-affected contexts; thus expanding upon how masculinities are perceived, understood and discussed within gendered analyses of conflict.

The chapter which follows will conclude this study by offering some final reflections on the contributions, implications, and also limitation of the study, as well as discussing possible directions for future research.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusion**

### **9.1 Introduction**

This thesis has set out to examine the experiences, vulnerabilities and identities of civilian men within conflicted societies, with particular reference to Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. As noted previously, civilian men have, to a significant extent, been overlooked with media accounts of conflict and within humanitarian policy and practice (Hutchings 2011; Allsopp 2015). They have also been largely overlooked within scholarship on masculinities and conflict, which has thus far primarily examined men as the perpetrators of political violence (Cockburn 2001; Skjelsbaek 2001; Goldstein 2003; Francis 2004; Steans 2006; Myrntinen et al. 2017). However, by exploring the lives and identities of civilian men within the aforementioned contexts, this thesis provides empirical evidence of how they respond to conflict and affirm their masculinities in political context and culturally specific ways. In doing so, the thesis enables new forms of theorisation in relation to masculinity and conflict, and makes a notable contribution to scholarship which specifically examines civilian masculinities.

In light of these aims and contributions, the purpose of this chapter is to conclude the thesis by providing an overview of the key arguments and findings of the research. It does so by examining the key points of each chapter, before reaffirming the overarching and inter-related themes and their contribution to scholarship on masculinities and conflict. It argues that although this research draws attention to the experiences and identities of civilian men within the aforementioned contexts, it additionally allows for new theoretical approaches and policy interventions which are likely to be applicable to multiple conflict-affected contexts. The chapter also suggests directions for further research within the field, with particular emphasis on scholarship on civilian masculinities. Finally, the chapter considers the limitations of the study, and concludes by offering a final reflection on the research and its utility to scholars and practitioners going forward.

### **9.2 Overview of Key Findings**

The introductory chapter set out the rationale for the research and the broad themes and research questions which it sought to explore. It also highlighted the current gaps in existing research and the extent to which civilian men have been largely

overlooked within scholarship on masculinities and conflict. Chapter 2 further examined the literature on the gendered dynamics of armed conflict and its tendency to focus on violent and militarised masculinities. It also drew attention to how, in comparison to women, children or other groups often associated with innocence and vulnerability, non-combatant men are rarely thought of as civilians in need of protection from such violence. It thus argued that accounting for the experiences and identities of civilian men was critical to the development of a more encompassing understanding of masculinities and conflict.

Chapter 3 set out the methodology employed in order to achieve the aims of the research. It located the study within the field of men and masculinities, and provided a rationale for the inclusion of both conflict sites and their respective research participants. It described the collection and analysis of data and the ethical challenges which arose during the research process. It also drew attention to how the collection of data is a gendered process, and highlighted the criticality of considering one's own gendered positionality whilst conducting research of this nature. To this end, I explored my own vulnerabilities and perceived gendered identity whilst carrying out research within both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories.

Chapter 4 examined the roots of violent conflict within the aforementioned contexts with reference to both their colonial histories and the key historical events which have shaped the regions in recent decades. With reference to the Occupied Territories, it explored the development of the checkpoint regime and its impact upon the lives of the inhabitants, while the development and significance of boxing within working-class communities was investigated with reference to Northern Ireland. Perhaps most significantly, the chapter drew upon existing literature in order to explore developments in the regions through a gendered lens, thus locating their contemporary realities within a gendered, historical perspective.

Chapter 5 examined two of the key concepts which were deemed integral to the research, namely, the concept of the civilian and of the male body. It discussed the legal and historical developments which gave rise to the category of people we now consider civilians, and explored how the gendered norms implicit within this category shaped the perceived protection needs of those within this group. Perhaps most crucially, the chapter highlighted how non-combatant men have often struggled

to credibly assert their civilian identities, or benefit from the protections associated with the civilian protection regime, given the extent to which this form of categorisation has been synonymous with gendered, specifically feminine, vulnerability. The chapter also discussed the corporality of civilian suffering, and highlighted the linkages between bodily vulnerability and the performance of civilian masculinity, with particular reference to the checkpoint regime within the Occupied Territories. The chapter thus suggests that the experience of bodily vulnerability can have a significant influence upon the performance of civilian masculinity during contemporary armed conflict.

Chapter 6 examined the findings which emerged from the data collected within Northern Ireland, and described how, during ongoing political violence, many of the participants found salvation, i.e. (most notably) protection and masculine validation, through the pursuit of boxing. Chapter 7 examined the findings which emerged from the data collected within the Occupied Territories. It revealed the degree to which the participants felt vulnerable to the effects of conflict-related violence, and the consequences of this in terms of the performance of male identity. It also explored the ways in which the participants constructed and affirmed their masculinities, primarily through the utilisation of various forms of knowledge.

Chapter 8 examined the findings derived from the aforementioned settings and what they reveal about masculinities and conflict more broadly. It discussed several themes which were deemed to be applicable to both sites, and a number which were considered to be more context specific. It also highlighted the relevance and applicability of such themes to conflict settings beyond the confines of either Northern Ireland or the Occupied Territories.

Cumulatively, Chapters 6-8 extend the analysis of the key themes and sites introduced in Chapters 2-5 by providing empirical data garnered over an extensive period in these two locales. In the section which follows, the relevance and applicability of these inter-related themes are further reaffirmed in relation to their contribution to the field of masculinities and conflict.

## **9.3 Contribution to Knowledge**

### **9.3.1 Vulnerability, Embodiment and Masculinities**

As has been noted above and reiterated throughout, this research has drawn attention to civilian men and their inherent vulnerabilities during periods of violent conflict. While civilian men have often been marginalised within existing scholarship and have had their gendered vulnerabilities largely overlooked (Carpenter 2003; Foster 2011; Hutchings 2011; Myrntinen et al. 2017) this study has sought to highlight their experiences, identities and disproportionate vulnerability to conflict violence. It has also provided a critical insight into the lived realities of vulnerability as reported by civilian men, something which hitherto has been almost entirely neglected. Moreover, it has highlighted the extent to which civilian men seek protection from the effects of conflict, and, indeed, how their experiences of vulnerability have implications in terms of the construction and affirmation of their masculine identities.

As highlighted within Chapter 8, the vulnerability to which the participants were exposed was often experienced most acutely at the bodily level. As a result, the management of the body was central to the strategies which the participants employed in order to reduce their vulnerabilities within their respective conflict environments. However, while the bodies of women, children and the elderly are often thought to constitute vulnerable bodies (Carpenter 2003; Slim 2008; ICRC 2010; Hirsch 2012), the male participants of this study had, by contrast, little recourse to the framework of vulnerability as defined by the norms associated with civilian protection. Thus, notwithstanding the presumptions around archetypal male bodies offering protection to men and those they seek to protect, it appears that for the participants their comparatively strong and able bodies were often something of a liability, serving to increase, rather than diminish, their vulnerability to conflict violence.

As noted within Chapter 5, scholars such as Connell (2005) and Mankayi (2008) have noted how the body and bodily performances are often central to the construction of masculinities, and, hence, the vulnerability of these identities to the effects of disability or physical injury. The present study has augmented this by highlighting the extent to which the performance of masculinity within conflict zones is also predicated on the maintenance of a functional body. As described in

Chapter 7, for example, participants from the Occupied Territories were careful to ensure that their bodies were perceived to be as non-threatening as possible, even if this meant temporarily accepting the subjugation of their masculinities at checkpoints or other sites of interaction with Israeli security personnel. Doing so, however, meant that they stood the best possible chance of remaining alive and avoiding arrest, thus ensuring that they could continue with their masculine performances at other times and places.

Indeed, given the precariousness of life within the Occupied Territories, avoiding arrest and even death had seemingly been recast as masculine responsibilities within this context, an absent father, son or husband being unable to contribute to family provision or community life. Furthermore, by utilising their (masculinised) knowledge of the conflict environment and/or their knowledge of the Hebrew language, the participants could more effectively exercise caution and vigilance and, hence, display masculine self-reliance through their ability to successfully navigate their conflict environments. They thus utilised their vulnerabilities as opportunities to affirm their masculinities, even if something of a temporary suspension was necessary during their interactions with Israeli security personnel.

As stated within Chapters 7 and 8, management of the body was also tied to how the participants from Northern Ireland sought to both affirm their masculinities and seek protection from the effects of conflict. For the participants within this context, being identified as a boxer symbolised the attainment of a quintessentially masculine identity, one which even engendered the respect of paramilitaries on both sides of the divide. However, in order for the participants to gain or, indeed, maintain their status as boxers and its associated protections, the careful management of their bodies, through rigorous discipline, training and dietary control, was essential.

This research has thus contributed to existing scholarship by highlighting the extent to which men's conflict-related experiences are embodied experiences. It has highlighted how the participants attempted to reduce their vulnerabilities by managing their bodies within their respective conflict environments. It has also explored how the strategies associated with the management of their bodies had a significant impact upon the construction and affirmation of their masculinities. In this respect, therefore, it has linked vulnerability, male embodiment, and the

construction of civilian masculinities in a manner which illuminates their intimate connections.

### **9.3.2 Socially and Culturally Valued Civilian Masculinities**

As noted within Chapter 2, hegemonic masculinities have often been conflated with violent or militarised masculinities (Kunz et al. 2018). However, as this research has shown, forms of masculinity which are not based on (social or political) violence or militarism can also be highly culturally valued during periods of armed conflict. Within Northern Ireland, for example, those identified as boxers enjoyed a relatively high level of social status both within their own communities and even across the community/religious divide. As underlined by Feldman (1991), such working-class communities had long celebrated those who would routinely emerge triumphant from bare-knuckled street fights, and in a similar vein, the more high-profile of the participants spoke about how their communities had taken an active interest in their boxing careers and shared in their sporting successes. Hence, as previously argued, boxers in this context could be both alpha males and civilian men, and could be celebrated for being so.

While such forms of socially and culturally valued civilian masculinity were perhaps slightly more difficult to identify from the data collected within the Occupied Territories, it was nevertheless clear that such forms existed. Participants, for example, appeared to regard the masculinities of older Palestine men to be both authentic and culturally valued, such men having proven their masculine credentials through fathering, grandfathering or the patient endurance of the occupation. In addition, the data revealed that a high level of education, the ability to speak Hebrew, and knowledge and understanding of the conflict environment were also considered markers of masculinity within this setting. By contrast, the participants often appeared to regard the masculinities of (particularly) young Israeli soldiers/security personnel to be ultimately illegitimate, their militarised power failing to enable them to claim legitimate authority. Hence, the participants were seemingly reiterating that which has previously been noted by Connell (2005), namely, that it is the ability to successfully claim authority, rather than direct violence, which is the mark of hegemony.

In order for civilian masculinities to be socially and culturally valued during periods of conflict, however, it seems necessary that such forms do not overtly challenge the prevailing gender norms within a given cultural context (Kunz et al. 2018). Such a dynamic would help to explain why the civilian masculinities of the Northern Irish participants were highly culturally valued during the conflict period, with boxing masculinities having long been celebrated within their respective communities. Furthermore, as highlighted within Chapter 6, such forms of masculinity shared much in common with militarised forms which would have been highly visible within such communities during the period.

Moreover, boxing identities (to the best of my knowledge) were only available to men during the conflict period, and thus the celebration of such forms of civilian masculinity also served to reinforce men's power and visibility within the public sphere. By contrast, while academic knowledge, knowledge of the Hebrew language, and knowledge of the conflict environment were forms of knowledge available to both men and women within the Occupied Territories, in practice, such forms of knowledge had largely been masculinised, which, in turn, had implications in terms of the preservation of men's power within public life and space.<sup>131</sup> Hence, while the civilian masculinities of the participants of both contexts could be characterised as non-violent in a social or political sense, they could not as readily be characterised as transformative or beneficial in terms of the societal position of women.

From a peacebuilding perspective, however, it seems that there may be advantages to interventions which aim to offer alternatives to (socially) violent or militarised forms of masculinity, whilst leaving prevailing gendered norms largely unchallenged.<sup>132</sup> Within Northern for example, I have argued that boxing could have been regarded as an informal yet culturally appropriate peacebuilding intervention, one which reduced the expectations upon young men from working-class communities to prove their masculinity through paramilitary membership or social deviance. The sport also enabled the collective enhancement of masculinities whilst

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<sup>131</sup> See Kunz et al (2018) for more on the preservation of the social and cultural power of civilian men during armed conflict.

<sup>132</sup> I acknowledge here that the advantages need to be contextualised with reference to how problematic prevailing gender norms may be. Although this additional layer of analysis is beyond the scope of this research, it may represent a point of departure for future study.

also facilitating contact and respect among those from both sides of the community/religious divide.

Within this setting, therefore, boxing served to address young men's culturally sanctioned, gendered interests and identities whilst steering them away from a path of prejudice or political or social violence. As a peacebuilding intervention, it would appear that it proved to be highly successful as it did not seek to outwardly challenge prevailing gender norms or to diminish the masculine identities of those who engaged in it. By contrast, it offered participants the potentiality of both increased masculine status and public/social visibility and acknowledgment.

This research has thus contributed to scholarship by showing that forms of masculinity which are not based on social or political violence or militarism can also be highly culturally valued during periods of conflict. Within Northern Ireland, boxing masculinities were culturally exalted, while within the Occupied Territories masculinities based on the acquisition of various forms of knowledge were highly desirable. Consequently, however, such interventions may involve a trade-off between offering men a path to masculine validation beyond social or political violence, and allowing prevailing gendered norms and masculine privilege to remain largely unchallenged.

### **9.3.3 Knowledge, Caution and Vigilance, and Masculinity**

As noted within previous chapters, while risk-taking has often been associated with hegemonic or high-status forms of masculinity (Barrett 2001; Higate and Hopton 2005), it seems that scholarship has largely overlooked the role of risk aversion in the construction of masculinities. Certainly, scholarship on masculinities and conflict appears to have neglected such an examination. However, one of the key findings which emerged from the data collected within the Occupied Territories was the extent to which the exercising of caution and vigilance was regarded as a key masculine responsibility. Moreover, given that the management of risk, particularly within asymmetric conflicts, is likely to be crucial to both combatants and civilians alike, it is a finding which I believe is likely to have resonance in a plurality of settings.

As stated in Chapter 8, it is revealing that the paucity of literature which does explicitly examine caution/vigilance and the construction of masculinities is located within scholarship on men's health, and more specifically, within literature exploring the management of bodily injury and vulnerability. That the participants from the Occupied Territories felt it was necessary to continually exercise caution and vigilance would thus suggest that they considered their bodily health to be both vulnerable and at perpetual risk.

As highlighted within Chapters 7 and 8, the exercising of caution and vigilance was closely linked to knowledge of the conflict environment, which, given their prominence within the public sphere (Mackenzie and Foster 2017), appeared to be primarily the preserve of men. Their vulnerability therefore necessitated the accrual of knowledge of the conflict environment which enabled the participants to exercise caution and vigilance, and thus demonstrate their capacity for masculine self-reliance within an environment of pervasive insecurity. It would appear, however, that this had the potential to reduce the power of women within public space, rendering them dependent upon the supposedly superior knowledge and competence of their male counterparts.

On balance, the masculine necessity of exercising caution and vigilance was much more evident in the Occupied Territories as compared to Northern Ireland. However, as noted in Chapter 8, while the pursuit of boxing may be thought of as engaging in risk-taking behaviour, there is undoubtedly a strong incentive to act with a degree of caution and vigilance so as to limit the injuries one's opponent may inflict. In addition, given the extent to which the participants felt the sport had protected them from the effects of the conflict, it would appear that they had been willing to place themselves at risk of injury within the boxing ring, so to speak, so as to gain the protection which the sport afforded them outside the ring. Hence, despite the risks inherent within the sport, the pursuit of boxing within this context may be regarded as an act of caution and self-preservation, rather than one of reckless risk-taking.

This research has thus contributed to knowledge by highlighting the ways in which the exercising of caution and vigilance, rather than risk-taking, may be utilised by men in conflict-affected contexts in order to construct and affirm their masculine identities. Within the context of the Occupied Territories, the participants utilised

their knowledge of the conflict environment in order to achieve this end, which would suggest that forms of knowledge are also critical to the construction of masculinities, a theme which hitherto remains largely unexplored. By contrast, and in line with the masculine resources at their disposal, the pursuit of boxing within Northern Ireland enabled the participants to act with caution and vigilance by affording them a degree of protection from violence outside the ring, if not within in. As suggested above, however, it would appear that forms of civilian masculinity associated with risk aversion may still be detrimental to the position of women within conflict-affected societies.

#### **9.3.4 Civilian Men, Protection, and Masculinity**

This research has also drawn attention to the extent to which the participants, as civilian men, either sought spaces of protection or sought to ensure that they were as safe as possible within conflict-affected spaces. As described in Chapter 6, for the participants from Northern Ireland their pursuit of boxing had seemingly protected or saved them from the perils of either perpetrating or falling victim to political violence; their pursuit of the sport endowing them with masculine status and enabling them to gain a degree of respect even amongst paramilitaries. Moreover, at a spatial level, a significant number of participants spoke about how their boxing clubs had been spaces of refuge during the conflict period, spaces within which they felt safe both physically and emotionally. Boxing coaches, it seems, leveraged their status as informal community leaders implementing hyper-masculine regimes in order to ensure the safety of these spaces. Such spaces, therefore, helped to protect young men from working-class communities who were disproportionately vulnerable to conflict violence in a manner which did not compromise their masculine identities or gendered aspirations.

By contrast, as emphasised within Chapter 7, there appeared to be a paucity of (masculine) spaces within the Occupied Territories which the participants considered safe. While such spaces may have existed in various forms, although not accessed directly during the field work underpinning this thesis, military incursions within both public and private space meant that participants often did not feel safe even within their homes or places of study. As a result, and as noted above, male participants in particular emphasised the need to remain continually vigilant and

cautious, by avoiding the carrying of objects which could be considered weapons and by acting in ways which would not be perceived as threatening in the eyes of the Israeli security forces. Hence, in response to the apparent dearth of safe spaces, it seems that the participants attempted to act in ways which would render the space around them as safe as possible.

To conclude, therefore, while the protection needs of civilian men have often been overlooked (Carpenter 2006a; Hirsch 2012), this research would suggest that they, too, seek spaces of both physical and emotional safety during periods of armed conflict. Recognition of this may also cast further doubt on the extent to which men willingly or enthusiastically take up arms during such periods. At a policy level, this finding serves to highlight the importance of reconceptualising how civilian men are perceived, and of devoting increased attention to their protection needs, which are not merely physical, but also psychological and emotional.

### **9.3.5 The Nature of Civilian Identity**

This research has additionally shed light on the nature of civilian identity. As noted within Chapter 7, as a result of the systematic violation of the rights of civilians, a significant number of the participants from the Occupied Territories appeared to struggle with, or even reject, their civilian identities. As an international or universal form of identity, they appeared to regard this form as peripheral at best, and secondary to their national, gender or class-based identities. Furthermore, given these factors and the degree to which their status as civilians had failed to protect them from the effects of conflict and military occupation, it would also seem that the participants had failed to fully internalise their civilian identities, even though it was very much in their interests to uphold the norms surrounding civilian protection.

By contrast, and as highlighted within Chapter 8, such participants appeared to suggest that they could draw more effectively upon other markers of their identities, beyond their status as civilians, in order to reduce their vulnerability to conflict violence. For example, described how speaking Hebrew during interactions with Israeli soldiers enabled them to gain the respect of the soldiers and helped to ensure that such interactions were characterised by reduced hostility and greater civility. Moreover, participants also suggested that a higher social status, as reflected, for instance, in one's dress or occupational affiliation, had the potential to be beneficial

during such interactions. Therefore, these markers of identity seemingly afforded participants greater protection during such circumstances than appeals to their civilian identity were likely to achieve.

The conflict in Northern Ireland also had a significant impact upon the lives of the civilian population, with civilians accounting for more than half of all those who lost their lives during the period (Sutton 2001). In a similar manner, the participants of this context could not rely upon their status as civilians in order to ensure their protection, and hence utilised other aspects of their identities, beyond their civilian identities, in order to reduce their vulnerability to conflict violence. They did so primarily by utilising their status as boxers in order to gain the respect of those active within paramilitary groups, the chivalric and masculine values shared by both boxers and paramilitaries seemingly serving to facilitate a suspension of the normal terms of conflict engagement. It was therefore their status as boxers, rather than their status as civilians, which appeared to offer participants most protection from the effects of armed conflict.

This research has thus contributed to our understanding of civilian identity by highlighting the ways in which those living within conflict zones may be relatively apathetic about claiming this form of identity, particularly if their rights as civilians are systematically violated. In fact, it would appear that such an identity is often considered to be secondary or peripheral, and hence not fully internalised even by those who have an active interest in upholding the norms of civilian protection. Moreover, the research has highlighted the ways in which those living within conflict-affected contexts may, perhaps more successfully, draw upon other markers of their identities, beyond their status as civilians, in an attempt to seek protection from the effects of violence. Finally, while such insights may have emerged from the conflict contexts under consideration, it is argued that they may facilitate a more holistic understanding of the nature of civilian identity within a plurality of conflict-affected contexts.

#### **9.4 Directions for Further Research**

This research has therefore contributed to scholarship on masculinities and conflict by focusing on themes which have thus far remained largely under-explored. For example, while scholarship on gender and conflict has largely focused on militarised

actors, this study has centred primarily upon civilians. While vulnerability during conflict has often been associated with the protection of women and children, this research has examined the vulnerability and protection needs of civilian men. Moreover, while risk-taking has often been thought to be integral to various forms of masculinity, this research has shown how risk-aversion can also play an important role in the shaping of masculine identity. Finally, while the centrality of the body has been acknowledged, this research has also recognised the importance of knowledge and the mind to the performance of masculinities.

The study has thus created space for new conversations to take place within the field of masculinities and conflict. In particular, I take the view that research on civilian masculinities has the potential to be significantly expanded. Herein, therefore, I suggest the investigation of a number of themes which may prove fruitful in terms of expanding this area of study and of furthering our knowledge and understanding of masculinities and conflict more broadly. While the following suggestions are not intended to constitute an exhaustive list, they may, nevertheless, act as signposts to those who wish to bring their creative curiosity to this area of study.

Civilian masculinities have been explored within a number of contexts, even if such identities have not been overtly referred to in such a manner within such explorations. Despite this, however, they remain unexplored in many others, and thus research which sets out to examine civilian masculinities within such contexts is to be welcomed. Further research examining the embodied experiences and vulnerabilities of men during conflict may also prove valuable, particularly if these are examined in relation to the construction and affirmation of their masculine identities. Moreover, the investigation of masculine spaces which remain non-militarised and within which men may seek refuge and support, may prove fruitful in terms of furthering our understanding of their physical and emotional needs during such periods.

Research which explores the strategies which men employ in order to seek protection from the effects of conflict, whilst also affirming their masculine identities, may also prove beneficial. In particular, an investigation into how men within conflict-affected contexts utilise masculine forms of knowledge in order to exercise caution and vigilance (i.e. risk-aversion) may prove revealing, as may

research which analyses the role which knowledge and intellect play in the construction of masculinities more broadly. In addition, a study of the nature of civilian identity within a variety of conflict contexts beyond Northern Ireland and Occupied Territories may inform a more holistic understanding of the civilian experience.

Beyond such themes, research investigating the ways in which men engage with formal or informal peacebuilding initiatives may also have the potential to make a significant impact. Such research, for example, may explore the ways in which peacebuilding initiatives either challenge or reinforce pre-existing gender dynamics, and the ways in which men engage with such initiatives as a result. In addition, research of this nature may examine how sport, as a peacebuilding intervention, relates to masculinities, including the complexities involved in attempting to positively shape male identities through sporting interventions. It would also be valuable to explore the masculine bonds which continue to exist between men even during armed conflict, and the extent to which such bonds may help to overcome conflict-related divisions both within sport and society more broadly.

The role played by women in the construction and affirmation of masculinities, including during periods of armed conflict, is also an area of scholarship which I believe merits further enquiry. This could, for instance, examine how women may uphold forms of masculinity associated with sporting or political violence, or their role in upholding forms of civilian masculinity which are nevertheless socially and culturally valued. Such research may also enquire into the ways in which women talk about men and their masculinities, as their insights may prove invaluable in gaining a more holistic understanding of the prevailing gender dynamics within a given cultural context, whether conflict-affected or otherwise. Finally, further research on female masculinities, both within militarised groups and more broadly, may serve to bring us towards a wider understanding of masculinities, bodies, and the fluid nature of gender identity.

## **9.5 Limitations of the Study**

As a PhD project, this study was bound by both time and monetary constraints and thus was not without its limitations, the most significant of which are discussed below. In the context of Northern Ireland for example, only one female participant

contributed to the research. While this reflects the extent to which boxing was a male dominated sport during the conflict, the narratives of the participants were nevertheless overwhelmingly masculine. The participants also held relatively privileged positions within their communities on account of their status as boxers, and hence were not entirely representative of working-class civilians during the period.

Moreover, as virtually all of the participants came from working-class communities located within urban areas, it could not be said that they were representative of those from more middle-class backgrounds, or, indeed, of those from more rural areas. A significant period of time had also passed between the signing of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and interviews with the participants, and, as a result, there is little doubt that their memories of the conflict were shaped both by the passage of time and the political context of the present. In particular, such memories are liable to have been fashioned in light of both survivor bias and the relative peace which Northern Irish society currently enjoys.

In relation to the Occupied Territories, the study was also limited in a number of respects. Firstly, the majority of participants from this context were students in their late teens or early twenties, and were not entirely representative of Palestinian society at large in terms of age or socio-economic status. Secondly, the majority of these participants were male, and so male voices were most prominent within the subsequent data. Thirdly, while I observed the dynamics at checkpoints on a number of occasions, the experiences which impacted upon me most forcefully involved observing mainly working-class men cross the more formalised checkpoints in the early hours of the morning to begin their work within Israel. However, while the students I interviewed were frequently required to cross checkpoints of various kinds, most of them would not have been required to cross these more formalised checkpoints at such an hour on a daily basis. Hence, there may have been something of a disconnection between my own observations of the checkpoints and the data provided by the participants.

## **9.6 Concluding Remarks**

At the time of writing, the futures of both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Territories remain uncertain. While devolved government in Northern Ireland has

recently been restored after a three-year absence, a lack of trust between the main political parties, funding constraints, and the ongoing uncertainty surrounding Brexit to name but a few of the issues mean that its ability to govern effectively will be sternly tested in the weeks and months ahead. In relation to the Occupied Territories, the Presidency of Donald Trump would appear to have raised political tensions in the region, and a comprehensive peace deal which would end the occupation would seem most improbable as long as he remains in office. Despite such threats, however, this research has highlighted the extent to which men within conflict-affected contexts often seek not to fuel violence, but to avoid it, navigate it, adapt to it, and find innovative ways to contribute to their communities and societies in a peaceful and courageous manner. Indeed, while those who participate in violent conflict are often considered to be real men, I would argue, to paraphrase of one of the participants, that civilians who steadfastly persist in face of peril and injustice may in fact be the most authentic of men.

## **Appendix I: Informed Consent Form (English Version)**

### **Informed Consent Form for Participants in the Study: “The Impact of Conflict upon Masculine Identities: Civilian- Military Interactions in Northern Ireland and Palestine”**

**Title of Project:** The Impact of Conflict upon Masculine Identities: Civilian- Military Interactions in Northern Ireland and Palestine

**Name of Researcher:** Seamus Campbell

**Name of Research Assistant:** To be Confirmed

- 1) I confirm that I wish to participate in the study [ ]
- 2) I confirm that I have read and understood an information sheet about the study [ ]
- 3) I confirm that I have been able to ask question about the study and that these questions have been answered [ ]
- 4) I understand that I can pause or withdraw from the interview at any time. I also understand that I can withdraw some or all of the information revealed during the interview at any time, up until the point where the results have been published or submitted to the university [ ]
- 5) I understand that the researcher will safely store all information received from the interview and will treat them confidentially within the limits of the law [ ]
- 6) I understand that the researcher will make every effort to ensure that I am only referred to in the final results of the study in the ways that I have given permission for.
- 7) I agree that the interview can be digitally recorded [ ]
- 8) I agree that handwritten notes can be taken during the interview [ ]

Participant has agreed verbally to the study [ ]

Date:

Researcher’s Signature:

**Contact details for the researcher:**

Seamus Campbell, Transitional Justice Institute, Shore Road, Newtownabbey, Northern Ireland, UK. BT39 0QB Email: Campbell-S25@email.ulster.ac.uk Telephone: TBC (Israel-Palestine) or (0044) 7542388824 (UK)

**Contact details for my supervisor:**

Fionnuala Ni Aoláin, Associate Director, Transitional Justice Institute (TJI), Shore Road, Newtownabbey, Northern Ireland, UK. BT39 0QB Email: f.niaolain@ulster.ac.uk/niaol002@umn.edu Telephone: (0044) 28 903 68630 or (001) 612 624 2318

## **Appendix II: Information Sheet for the Participants from Northern Ireland**

### **“The Impact of Conflict upon Masculine Identities: Civilian- Military Interactions in Northern Ireland and Palestine”**

**Name of Researcher:** Seamus Campbell

#### **What is this study about?**

This study will look at how conflict affects men. It will explore how men view themselves and their roles during periods of conflict. In particular it aims to understand how civilian men are affected by their interactions with military/security personnel as they go about their daily lives. Sites at which such interactions may occur include at checkpoints, during stop searches, and during house raids. The impact of these types of encounters will be explored within Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine.

#### **What is this study for?**

This is an academic study being carried out for a PhD programme which is based at the Transitional Justice Institute, Ulster University. This study is funded through Northern Ireland’s Department for Education and Learning (DEL) Studentship Programme. It is hoped that it will help us to better understand how civilian men are affected by conflict. Findings may be published within academic journals, but will not be published or used for any other purposed outside academia.

#### **Am I eligible to participate?**

If you have memories related to the conflict and interactions with military/security personnel and remained civilian throughout the conflict, then you are eligible to participate. However, if you were a member of the state security forces or a non-state armed group then you will not be eligible to participate.

#### **What do I have to do?**

You do not have to participate in the study if you do not want to. If you choose not to participate, I will not record your name or any of your personal details.

However, if you would like to participate, I would like to talk to you about your experiences of meeting those from the police and the military at checkpoints, during street/stop searches, or during searches/raids at your home. The interview will last about 60 minutes and can take

place at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview is only for academic study and will not be given to any other people for any other purposes.

If you would like to participate in the study, I will ask you to read the Informed Consent form, which will confirm that you would like to participate in the study and under which conditions. You do not have to sign this form, but if you tell me that you want to participate, I will record this as a record of your consent.

You do not have to provide me with any personal information and I will not record where the interview took place. With your permission I would like to record the interview using a digital recorder, or alternatively by writing handwritten notes, but you if you do not want to you do not have to agree to either of these. You can also choose to pause or stop the interview at any point. After the interview you can decide what information can and cannot be used for the study. You can even choose to decide to withdraw all the information from the interview, or indeed to withdraw from the study completely at any point up until October 2017 (when the research will be submitted to the university).

### **Contact Details**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, you can contact me (Seamus Campbell) directly or alternatively you can contact my supervisor (Professor Fionnuala Ni Aoláin).

#### **Contact details for the researcher:**

Seamus Campbell, Transitional Justice Institute, Shore Road, Newtownabbey, Northern Ireland, UK. BT39 0QB Email: Campbell-S25@email.ulster.ac.uk Telephone: 028 90366577 or 07542388824

#### **Contact details for my supervisor:**

Professor Fionnuala Ni Aoláin, Associate Director, Transitional Justice Institute (TJI), Shore Road, Newtownabbey, Northern Ireland, UK. BT39 0QB Email: f.niaolain@ulster.ac.uk/niaol002@umn.edu Telephone: (0044) 28 903 68630 or (001) 612 624 2318

## **Appendix III: Information Sheet for the Participants from Israel-Palestine (English Version)**

### **Information Sheet for Those Taking Part in the Study “The Impact of Conflict upon Masculine Identities: Civilian- Military Interactions in Northern Ireland and Palestine”**

**Name of Researcher:** Seamus Campbell

**Name of Research Assistant:** To be Confirmed

#### **What is this study about?**

This study will look at how conflict affects men. It will explore how men view themselves and their roles during periods of conflict. In particular it aims to understand how civilian men are affected by their interactions with military/security personnel as they go about their daily lives. Sites at which such interactions may occur include at checkpoints, during stop searches, and during house raids. The impact of these types of encounters will be explored within Israel-Palestine and Northern Ireland.

#### **What is this study for?**

This is an academic study being carried out for a PhD programme which is based at the Transitional Justice Institute, Ulster University, Northern Ireland. This study is funded through Northern Ireland’s Department for Education and Learning (DEL) Studentship Programme. It is hoped that it will help us to better understand how civilian men are affected by conflict. Findings of the study will be submitted to the university as part of the PhD. Findings may also be published within academic journals, but will not be published or used for any other purposes outside academia.

#### **Am I eligible to participate?**

If you have had, or continue to have regular interactions with military/security personnel and have remained civilian throughout the conflict, then you are eligible to participate. However if you are or were a member of the state security forces or a non-state armed group then you will not be eligible to participate in the study.

### **What do I have to do?**

You do not have to participate in the study if you do not want to. If you choose not to participate, I will not record your name or any of your personal details.

If you would like to participate, I would like to talk to you about your experiences of meeting those from the police and the military at checkpoints, during street/stop searches, or during searches/occupations at your home. The interview will last about 60 minutes and can take place at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview is only for academic study and will not be given to any other people for any other purposes. A research assistant employed by me may assist with the interview. However, this person has agreed not to share any information related to the project with anyone else, and all information will be held confidentially.

If you would like to participate in the study, I will ask you to read the Informed Consent form, which will confirm that you would like to participate in the study and under which conditions. You do not have to sign this form, but if you tell me that you want to participate, I will record this as a record of your consent.

You do not have to provide me with any personal information, and I will not record where the interview took place. With your permission I would like to record the interview using a digital recorder, or alternatively by writing handwritten notes, but you if you do not want to you do not have to agree to either of these. You can also choose to pause or stop the interview at any point. After the interview you can decide what information can and cannot be used for the study. You can even choose to decide to withdraw all the information from the interview, or indeed to withdraw from the study completely at any point up until October 2017 (when the research will be submitted to the university).

### **Contact Details**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, you can contact me (Seamus Campbell) directly or alternatively you contact my supervisor (Professor Fionnuala Ni Aoláin).

### **Contact details for the researcher:**

Seamus Campbell, Transitional Justice Institute, Shore Road, Newtownabbey, Northern Ireland, UK. BT39 OQB Email: Campbell-S25@email.ulster.ac.uk Telephone: TBC (Israel-Palestine) or (0044) 7542388824 (UK)

**Contact details for my supervisor:**

Professor Fionnuala Ni Aoláin, Associate Director, Transitional Justice Institute (TJI), Shore Road, Newtownabbey, Northern Ireland, UK. BT39 0QB Email: [f.niaolain@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:f.niaolain@ulster.ac.uk)/  
[niaol002@umn.edu](mailto:niaol002@umn.edu) Telephone: (0044) 28 903 68630 or (001) 612 624 2318

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