


2005-06-03

# Chris Gilligan

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**Prof. Chris Gilligan, "Trauma, Victimhood and Identity in the Northern Ireland Peace Process." Friday, 3 June 2005, 9:30-11:00 am, Council Chamber, Magee College, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland. Tape name: Chris Gilligan1/2 2005.**

The scene opens with a projected screen behind Chris Gilligan, who is sitting in a chair, that reads "Bucknell University Summer School 2005: Trauma, Victimhood and Identity in the Northern Ireland Peace Process."

00:05

Carl Milofsky speaks: We are going to start this presentation by saying "Chris! We videotape things for our program!" And we use the video tapes for purposes such as teaching students or things such as pre-class and we have an archive of the tapes that we value and share with other teachers. It's possible that we make a documentary off these tapes. Do we have your permission to video tape?

Chris Gilligan: "Certainly" I presume some of you may have seen my face from last year, then?

Carl says, "there is" and Chris Gilligan says, "yeah." There is laughter from the students.

Carl: Chris is a sociologist (Chris laughs) and you may have seen the paper from him on one of the reserve readings? And there's 2 things: one we have an idea of trying to develop more free tracks on integrated education and one is civil society. And we have all kinds of scheduling conflicts. One group was supposed to be somewhere else but it seems both groups are now present here. He (unseen speaker) makes note of a paper by Ed Cairns that was recently relevant on the identity theory, that has a sociological representation of the theory. It has some contrast with the psychological approach, it is not as sharply drawn. Part of the thing that is really important about it is the way the identity theory has worked into the Good Friday Agreement and so this is sort of an expansion of that conceptual area. We had a good discussion with parents going Wednesday and we hope that there is a lot of interest and a lot of questions in this topic. So, go to it Chris.

2:39

Chris Gilligan begins speaking now: Thanks Carl. After that great introduction, we are actually going to do something a bit different than what Carl thought I was going to do. Have you all had a read of the paper I wrote on identity?

Carl interjects: Probably some but not all. What we did was give them 6 papers and say you can read 3.

Chris: So there's a 2 in 1 chance you've read. What I'm gonna do is I'm gonna look at the issue of trauma in the context of the peace process and have some discussion of identity and the context of that. I want to keep it fairly brief what I've got to say because I find that it's more useful if we have discussion. If there's things that I cover too quickly and assume too much knowledge on your part, raise your hand for questions at the end. Then I've got some questions myself for you at the end in case everybody is quiet and nobody has anything to say, some questions to get you thinking.

3:55

\*Switches to a slide on the projector screen entitled "Identity, Conflict Related Trauma and Victimhood" the rest of the words on the slide are hard to make out (too bright)\*

What I'm gonna look at is 3 main things really: what is trauma? A study that I was involved in that looked at children and counseling referrals for trauma and then look at what I referred to as "victim entrepreneurs." The issues of trauma is something that has come to the fore in the context of the peace process. After the ceasefires in 1994 there was a growth in numbers of people referred for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and trauma related mental health problems, which on the surface is a bit odd.

4:45

\*Switches to a slide entitled "What is Trauma? PTSD" again the rest of the slide is albeit unreadable.

But first let me just point out what trauma is. The American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* definition of post traumatic stress disorder \*gestures to screen\* in order for someone to be diagnosed as suffering from PTSD they have to fulfill 4 criteria:

1. Witness or experienced a traumatic event.
2. Display a range of symptoms that fall within 1 of 3 groups: intrusion, constriction or avoidance, increased arousal. So that's things like nightmares, that would be an example of intrusion, things like remembering the event. Constriction or avoidance for example, people not wanting to go past the place where they witnessed the event. And increased arousal, things like irritability or excitement, lack of concentration. And all of those things are conceived as being memories, painful memories of the traumatic event.
3. Numbing of responsiveness to the external world. A feeling of alienation from the external world.
4. The symptoms must not have been present before the traumatic event. The symptoms of 2 and 3 are symptoms too of other psychiatric disorders, so they might have an anxiety disorder or something else. In order to be diagnosed of PTSD the person must have experienced a traumatic event and the symptoms they displayed must come after experiencing that event. It's sort of causal, because of the traumatic event the symptoms follow. It is the event which creates the trauma.

7:30

Now in the literature on trauma it is generally acknowledged that traumatic symptoms tend to recede as people are removed from the source of stress, so you can imagine if someone is involved in a riot, they might display symptoms of stress but if they move away from the area where the riot is taking place those symptoms will recede. The notion that time is a great healer captures that idea. If you're removed from the source of stress then symptoms will recede. So for that reason, it's odd that you find a growth in referrals for trauma since the cease fires because you would expect that when the conflict recedes that there would be a decline in the number of people referred for trauma, but it seems that the contrary is the case.

8:30

\*Chris again gets up to change the slide, but the camera is zoomed in on him too much that we no longer can see what the slide says\*

One of the reasons why this is the case is I would argue that trauma is not a medical condition in the way that ...it's not a virus that people catch. Trauma is an existential illness. It is something that is to do with how people understand the world and the meaning they give to their experiences. So for example, there's an interesting study that looked at retired RUC officers some who were in the critical range for PTSD and the things they were talking about is how in the context of the peace process the actions which they carried out in the past didn't have any meaning. So they were saying things like, "Well what was it all for? What did we fight for?" because their actions in the past, for them they were defending Queen and country, or upholding the law, defending the country against terrorists and now the people who they were supposed to be defending the country against are in the government. Martin McGuinness is the Education Minister. Gerry Adams is a minister in the Stormont assembly. For them it's not, I would argue, that the events of the past created the trauma, it's the context the peace process, the way that they understand the experiences of their past has changed and the meaning they give to the experiences of their past has changed. That's why there has been a growth in referrals for trauma, or at least part of the reason there has been a growth in referrals for trauma, as far as I'm concerned looking at it from a sociological point of view.

10:30

In work that I've done myself you can find evidence for saying that trauma is something which is mediated by the meaning people give to events. Myself and a colleague from the psychology department did a study of children from primary school who had, the school was for an extended period of time were under a barrage of sustained harassment and intimidation. Half of the students at the school received counseling and half didn't receive counselling. For us it was interesting to look at this and see what if there was a distinction between the two groups and what the distinction was between the two groups. We would've expected, given the definition of PTSD that the exposure to the event, the event itself would be a key factor in determining whether or not a student received counseling or not. We would've expected that mental health would be another key factor, so that the child's state of mind or the parent's idea of the child's state of mind for being referred for counseling. We looked at a range of different things that might differentiate between the two groups and found that out of those range of things, the ones that were not significant at all was the child's exposure to intimidation, either at the school or exposure surrounding that, because many people lived at interface areas. So they lived near a peace line that was an indicator of them being exposed to events or their experience of violence at some other time. None of those were statistically significant in terms of differentiating between the between the two groups.

12:40

Milofsky points out something on the screen we aren't able to see. Chris explains for the tests on the table on the screen, to be statistically significant, you are looking for a number between 0 and .05. One of the columns shows whether or not the variable was significant and the next is the magnitude of the effect.

Chris: None of these things the exposure, parents, mental health, were predictors. In other words, someone who had been exposed a lot to intimidation vs. someone who was not exposed much, you couldn't predict which of those had received counseling or not / been referred to counseling. Apparent state of mind couldn't predict whether someone had referred counseling or not. What we did find is the most significant factors \*points to slide we can't see\* were: the perception of the community divide, so the extent to which parents thought there was a significant difference or divide between Catholics and Protestants. Those who had a perception of a large divide between the two communities were much more likely to refer their children to counseling. Attitudes toward counseling was another predictor variable...that's understandable...though we don't know if that's retrospective. We don't know if these attitudes were present before and that was why parents referred the child for counselling or if it's based on the experience of the child receiving counseling and they have a positive attitude towards it. And perception of political progress.

So out of those 3 most significant factors, 2 are political or ways in which people are interpreting or understanding the events which take place. Those were the things that were best able to predict whether the children receive counseling or not. Not the exposure to the event, not mental health. The parent's rating of their child's mental health, \*talking about slide: we are looking at the closer we get to 0 the more significant and then over .05, closer to 1 the less significant it is\* parents rating of their child's mental health was significant but not as significant as some of these other political ones.

15:50

So I just raise that...I'm not going to talk about other things...to support the point I've made about mental health. People's attitudes towards counseling and whether people receive counseling depends on the framework of meaning people give to those events. So, I'd say you can't reduce trauma to a mental health issue. Presenting it as a mental health issue really reduces the complexity of the politics of the situation and presents it as if it's something having to do with the individual mind and how the individual mind responds to events rather than the way in which people interpret things in a wider social and political context.

16:45

Another reason why there's been a growth in referrals for counseling is because there's more counsellors. I've had one person who is an expert in the field who says that the best predictor for the rate of counseling in Northern Ireland is the number of counselors there are and you can predict the level of referrals from the number of counselors there are. And while I think that's being a little bit cynical, there is something in it. One of the things that's happened with the peace agreement is there has been a rapid expansion of money for victims and a lot of that money, and it seems to be increasingly a higher proportion of that money is going towards counseling and not just other aspects of victims work.

17:36

A study that we looked at EU Peace Funding found that of 55 groups that were funded under the victims category only a third of the groups existed prior to the Bloomfield report which was the first report on victims. So once government started to look at the issue of victims, the victims group started to appear, which is why I refer to them as "victim entrepreneurs." It's groups that are coming out and developing in response to policy. The report found that only 1/4 of the groups existed prior to the cease fires and many of them weren't necessarily working with victims. So things such as Save the Children Fund or Bernardo's have since the ceasefires started to develop began to work with victims. Prior to that they were working with issues like poverty or domestic violence and they had taken on more work on victims since the cease fires. This report found that 3 of the groups didn't even exist prior to finding out that there was going to be funding from the EU. My wife who works in the voluntary sector suggests that the three groups were set up to gain the funding. Once the government announces funding they say, "Well how do we get this money? Well, we have to set up a victims group if we're going to get the money." Which doesn't necessarily mean it's cynical motives. One of the things that happens with voluntary groups is you have to do what funders want or you have to put in a proposal for what funders want, it may mean that if you have a literacy program for an area where a lot of people have suffered as a consequence of the Troubles, you present your literacy program as "victim's work" and maybe get the funding but continue to do a literacy program but you can say that because there was such a high rate of deaths in the area that it's a victim's program too.

19:50

\*Chris is up from his seat and he seems to be changing the slide again though we aren't really able to see what he is doing\*

Where this relates to identity... There's a British sociologist, Frank Fraley, who has written a lot of interesting work trying to understand contemporary risk consciousness and the growth of therapy culture. In his book on culture fair he says, "In the past people who have suffered from a particular violent incident did not identify themselves as victims. This is not because they did not suffer or did not carry their scars with them for the rest of their lives, but because the experience was not seen as 'identity defining. In contrast, today there's a belief that victimhood affects us for life. It becomes a crucial element of our identity." He's suggesting that the things that happen to us aren't necessarily understood as significant. It's in a broader social and cultural context we decide what things that have happened to us are significant. He suggests that there's a growth of a victim culture and an increasing proclivity for people to identify themselves as being victims. As taking a victim identity.

21:20

One of the things I'd like us to look at in the conversation is whether that's the case and he's talking, not about Northern Ireland specifically but about Anglo-American culture in general.

\*Chris once again steps off screen seemingly to change the slide but it's unseeable\* I think one of the things that's happening, one of the reasons why there's a growth in referrals for counseling is that people are reinterpreting their experiences in a way that means they are starting to adopt identities as victims. There's a lot of people who aren't doing this, there's a lot of people who are

resisting, though there's a definite trend. One of the things that's happening is that victim entrepreneurs are encouraging people to reinterpret their experiences. And this is a quote \*gestures toward screen\* from a report produced by Bernardo's which was involved in an education program for mental health and to get people to think about how the Troubles had affected them. There's a quote from a parent who said, "No one told us about trauma and its impact before. Only now are we able to see the impact on ourselves and our children. We were just surviving before, we hadn't thought about children picking up on everything." What I suggest is happening with that program is people are being encouraged to reflect on their past experiences and interpret them in the context of victimhood and in the context of trauma. And where in the past they would give a political meaning to their experiences, understand them in political terms, now they've been encouraged to understand them in the context of individual mental health and how it impacts on their mental health as individuals.

23:15

So this, just to conclude, one of the things I've been arguing is that while there are many things that are specific to NI and there are many aspects of NI society that are maybe different from the Republic of Ireland, from the rest of the UK, many of the trends that we are seeing in NI are wider trends. NI is not something that is immune from the rest of the world. There are many trends that are happening across the rest of the world that have particular manifestations or interact in particular ways in NI. And one of the things that has been happening broadly, as Frank Fraley refers to it, is therapy culture and the culture of victimhood. That's one of the things more broadly happening that has a particular manifestation in NI. One of the things that's happened there is that people are becoming more individualized, certainly this is an Anglo-American culture, and the way they relate to our experiences as individuals rather than as members of groups or members of collectivities. That I think is one of the reasons why the notion of victimhood has more purchase today. So that's me. Talked myself out.

24:45

Milofsky: One of the things we've run into a lot in Derry is storytelling. Seems to be very much connected to this and trauma. Some of the people need to get their story out that its sort of a sense of repressed memory and that sort of thing. The other part of it is there's all of these people who have had all of these tremendous personal losses. How do you get to a point where people are able to forgive the other side? It seems to me that some of the things that people are working on, getting people to think about themselves seems to be a good dynamic. We have some people here working in programs for that kind of thing.

26:00

Chris: I'm not sure where to start. \*laughter\* The story telling I think is another example of some of the things that I've been talking about. Kind of, I don't know if Carl's asked this, he's asked me to write something about storytelling for a book he's editing so he's been forcing me to think about this every time I'm with him. And I've been starting to ask myself questions and one of the questions why has there been a growth in story telling in the public domain? If you look at it in some respects, its nothing new, people tell stories all of the time. The fact that Ireland in some

respects has a tradition of oral storytelling and how some forms of storytelling that have kind of formalized. And you probably find it if you get talking to people here that they'll talk to you all day and tell you all sorts of stories. So in that sense there's nothing new about storytelling and the way the people relate stories about the past and their experiences.

But there is something different going on. If you ask, well what's the purpose of storytelling and that's something I think that's a bit different. And it's partly I think that context of peace process and people thinking about the past and dealing with the past, so the question about how do we relate to the past, how do I make sense of my own experiences of what happened to family? Some of those questions are questions people have been asking, for people who have lost family members, have been asking since they lost their family members. And it's that the peace process provides context in which they can start to ask those questions publicly. I think that's particularly the case with people who didn't have community support, so if your family member was an active Republican who was shot by security forces, then there was a community support there, so those kind of questions and stories were stories that were told on platforms and people came to America to share their stories and the storytelling there had a different function than today.

But if your family member was someone who was categorized as an informer and was shot by the Republicans because they were an informer, then that's something very difficult to talk about in the community and it's something when dealing with the peace process space has opened up for people in those circumstances to start to raise questions and look for avenues to tell their stories. So, there's something about context which means some stories come out now that couldn't come out in the past. There's also something about the institutional framework which enables stories to come out.

But then there's also questions about what stories are told and what stories aren't told. Because I find some mature students here, who've lived in Derry all their lives and some of them when they are telling stories about memories they have about growing up, it's all hilarious stories. It's things about like driving and having a taxi service in the Cregan and driving around with unlicensed taxi and cars with no insurance and being chased by the police and having them have land rovers and drive around and skidding around corners. Lots of memories they have are humorous things that even in the midst of terror sometimes. And many of those stories get excluded because the way the storytelling is set up in terms of dealing with the past, it encourages people to present themselves as victims, to look at the heart, look at the damage that's been done, not to remember what you might call the positive aspects to the conflict. I think there's something else that needs acknowledged. Storytelling the way in which it's structured does encourage some stories and excludes other stories and that's the kind of purpose of it.

For some people it's for healing. For some people it's for justice. They want people prosecuted. They want the state to admit culpability. There's lot of things going on there, there's a lot of agendas at work. All that kind of stuff is different from what you'd hear in the pub if they have a few drinks and ask them about life in Derry or growing up in Derry. I don't know it that answers your question.



31:40

I'll try to not be so long in the next answer. \*smiles\*

Student with questions: What I've noticed from being in Londonderry is that there seems to a lot of media attention or just people looking at the fact that they're a part of this conflict. People come here to study their conflict and they say things like, "Oh you're here to study the peace process." And then I see things in the newspapers that say maybe if there was not so much media coverage or emphasis on the conflict that resolution would come about faster because people aren't telling them that they have this problem. What do you think?

Chris: I think that, this may be where I disagree with Ed Cairns. I think to understand the conflict and the reason why there is conflict, you need to look at political, economic and social issues, not individual psychology. You've probably been struck, many people are struck when they come to Northern Ireland, by how friendly people are, and I think in terms of interpersonal relations between people, NI is a friendly place. I used to have a colleague who's gone back to Greece in the sociology department here and he used to set the questions for students, "How can people in NI be so friendly and sectarian at the same time?" That's good question. It does make you think, "why is this the case?" You can't really understand why there's been a conflict or why individuals have engaged in the things they have if you try to understand it in terms of personality. Many people who have been involved in killing people are actually very nice people. Which seems odd and it's only when you put it in political context and understand what people are trying to achieve that you can start to understand it. I think its as long as there's unresolved political issues there's going to continue to be tensions.

In some respects, I'd turn your question around or challenge your assumptions, because I'm not sure that NI is a particularly violent place anymore. It certainly if you look in terms of statistics it doesn't stand out particularly as a violent place compared to the rest of the UK. I've had people say to me that they feel more unsafe in large American cities than they ever do walking around Belfast or Derry. So I'm not sure that NI is necessarily a more violent place, but its violence is structured in different ways. I could be wrong, but I don't think you have peace walls in American cities, where you do have that in NI and that's one way it's structured differently.

35:20

Student with question: So with your mention of Cairns, you were saying that you think you differ from him a little because you were saying you chose to emphasize the importance of social and political values. The thing is, we just spoke with Cairns recently, I'm trying to understand the difference between your points of view. He emphasized not are these factors are not important, but that most of these factors had been solved. The initial problems such as during the civil rights movement, how they were fighting for equal pay and equal housing and most of these problems have been solved and yet there's still this conflict. He also emphasized the importance of the group as opposed to the individual and how the violence is not that large, the acts of violence aren't usually acts of an individual they are usually acts of a group. It is just too coincidental that everytime... So how do you feel about that? Do you agree that most of those

problems have been solved? And if so, why do you still see such an emphasis on these factors as opposed to social identity and psychology?

36:44

Chris: These are all very good questions. I'm not sure to what extent I disagree with Cairns now, certainly what he was writing in the early 80s, I think there's a very big difference in answers, where if you look at the work that he draws on of Tajfel and he says you know there are these economic, political, social factors, but beyond those there are psychological and group identity. I think that's a very big thought and as a sociologist I would say, well where do these ideas come from? Where does group identity come from? And I would say it is those economic and political and social factors that structure Northern Irish society and create those groups.

The thing that's more difficult is to try and understand why there's the persistence of nationalist and unionist or Catholic and Protestant distinction in a context where it doesn't seem as though there is the basis for that anymore. So if you look at discrimination in housing that's largely been dealt with. Actually someone put this quite well, I don't know if you've met Bernadette McAliskey, I saw her speak once and she said, "Let's look at the civil rights demand, one man one vote, we did better than that because women can vote now too. If we look at equal access to jobs and housing then we have done that, the state's done that. If we look at the understanding that the B-specials and the repeal of the emergency powers act. Those one's weren't the...the B-specials were disbanded. People like Bernadette McAliskey would argue then they were given military training and turned into the UDR and the emergency powers act was repealed and it became the prevention of terrorism act and there was even more oppressive legislation introduced. NI became a police state. In the context peace process, all that kind of security, dimension, doesn't feature anymore, so if she were speaking today she would say that's kind of been dealt with. So what does that leave and why is there still this distinction? And I think that's why psychological explanations have an appeal, because that seems to be all that there is left. But, I don't think you can't understand it just by looking at psychological explanations. One of the things that's happened with the peace process is that it's been able to advance not by transcending the distinction between Nationalist and Unionist or Catholic and Protestant, but by preserving those. If you look at the assembly where instead of it being an assembly where parties come in and they form a coalition based on whoever is prepared to work together. The way the assembly is set up is that its all of the members of the assembly have to designate themselves as Nationalist, Unionist or Other so that they come in to say, "We represent the Nationalist community." not people in NI. And the people who are trying to cut across that say we represent the "others." So the way in which the agreement is based takes this assumption that NI is a polarized society and that there's not much to do with it, that you kind of have to just work on the basis of these polarized groups and then a lot of things then get interpreted in that context. So for example unemployment, although there's fair employment legislation, it's still true that Catholics are more than twice as likely to be unemployed than Protestants. It's very easy to look at that and say it shows there must be discrimination. To some extent there is, and to some extent there isn't. There isn't to the extent that there isn't direct discrimination anymore, it's not like when you apply for a job now that someone looks down your resume and says now what

school did you go to? Oh right, no, we aren't giving you a job. You don't have that. But you do have structural discrimination in the sense that most of the jobs, most of the infrastructure is in Belfast and the surrounding area. The area West of the (River) Bann is much less developed and proportionately there's a lot more Catholics West of the Bann than there are Protestants. That's one of the reasons why there's higher Catholic unemployment. If you look in the age profile of Catholic population compared to Protestant, you'll find there's a younger age profile for Catholics and youth are more likely to be unemployed than old people, so there's another reason why.

But that's not how people interpret it, because the context and the framework says that the main divide in NI society isn't a class one or a regional one, but it's presented as it's a sectarian one. So people interpret those experiences in that framework. So in that sense it's psychological in the meaning of the framework through which people interpret things but I don't think it's psychological, in that there's a built-in hatred of other people. It's structures in society that have enforced that rather than something that's inherent in the brain, which to my mind is a more optimistic way of looking at things. Because if it's something wrong with structure in society, then it's something that you can do something about, whereas if it's something inherent, then there's nothing you can do about it and all attempts to overcome the differences are doomed to fail because if it is inherent. I don't think it is, I think it's to do with the structures. Difficult question is identifying the mechanisms through which that happens and developing ways to dismantle those structures.

44:25

Student with question: In the generation that's coming up after the ceasefires where there's been much less violence, do you think that the victimhood that the community has kind of put on themselves will continue? Or do you think it will actually decrease as less violent acts are being done or will it just continue on through storytelling and wall murals, even if the events are occurring in the recent past?

Chris: You would think that as the people are growing up with less experience of the Troubles and of violence that they wouldn't identify as victims, because what is it they've got in their own personal experience to identify with? I think to some extent that will be the case. But there also do seem to be trends toward young people, in some respects, identifying more as victims than older generations. So you have the Bloody Sunday example, there's a study done by some psychologists here that look at the stress amongst families and family members who weren't born when Bloody Sunday happened displayed high stress levels, higher than the population more broadly. Personally I think you can explain that through the stresses of the tribunal and the circumstances of that, people having to revisit the past, the pressures of families preparing for trial and being cross-examined and the effect that has on the families as a whole rather than it being something that's passed on genetically. But there is also something about storytelling and passing on notions of victimhood as an identity and a way that people understand themselves and there does seem to be a tendency towards that.

There also seems to be a growth in other contemporary psychological disorders...I don't like to call them psychological disorders...social ailments, that individuals experience or display like self

harm, bulimia, anorexia, cutting, suicide. There seems to be a growth amongst those things among young people. Some people interpret that in the context of the peace process and I think although many of the explanations given that people involved might have been related to the conflict I think if you look at the broader context of growth of that phenomena, it is to do with broader anxieties of living in the world today or what is the purpose of society today? It's not just schools in NI. The way in which we understand the world around us, we draw on frameworks of meaning and it means that there are local cultural things I specifically that mean people will interpret their experiences and wouldn't necessarily think, "the reason I'm anorexic is to do with.." I mean nobody thinks its to do with existential acts. They look for some explanation as to why they are feeling the way they are. I think we need to put it into a broader context and try to understand why it's happening more broadly and by doing that we will put some more blight on Northern Ireland, there's a danger of becoming too angular and just looking at NI itself and trying to understand things here by just looking at NI.

49:10

Student with question: She asks about the assigned paper where he explores and challenges the idea of identity. I had a question about the article that we read. In it you talked about the problem of \*\*\*CANNOT HEAR ANY OF THIS GIRLS QUESTION  
How would you go about shaping an identity that LOUD COUGH AND DROPPING STUFF can't hear anything

Chris: I'm not going to answer your question but I'll tell you why I'm not going to answer your question. One of the things I was trying to do in that paper is show how there's a range of different ways in which the term identity is understood. So there are people who understand it as something inherent, there are people who have a more contextual understanding of identity and there have been studies that look at things like that. Studies that look at national identity in NI find very consistently that a proportion of the population identify themselves as Irish a portion identify themselves as British. you would think that that's something that's inherent or given or people strongly identify it in that way. But there's other studies that ask people, "What do you think of yourself?" and when it's asked in that more kind of open ended way you find national identities comes down the list somewhere and it tends to be more as roles like mother, or to do with locality, so the way people identify themselves depends a lot on the context. Every so often I teach some American students who visit NI and they say they never realized how "American" they were until they come to visit NI or until they come out of America. And it is true lots of things you take for granted and put yourself in a different context and you realize how much you do take for granted and when you contrast yourself with different people in a different context you realize how much of what you thought made you different in the circumstances which you normally have, you actually probably have a lot more in common with people than you thought

The question about identity, more the way I would approach it is why are people interested in identity now? If it's something the notion of how you think of yourself, we need that psychologically you need that. If you don't have a sense of yourself, then you're going to be a completely different person when you wake up tomorrow morning than you are today unless you

have some sense of continuity. And that's a classic symptom of madness is not having the sense of continuity of self. So that's something we all need and then identity is something as well that allows us to locate ourselves in relation to what's happening around us. Since that's something that is inherent to our being as conscious beings, the question for me is, why are people talking about this? And if you look at it, it's not actually until the middle of the 20th century that people start to ask questions about identity and what identity is. And it comes initially in discussions of identity crisis and a breakdown in a sense of continuity of personality. I think that's one of the reasons why people are so interested in identity today is because it seems to be quite difficult today to gain identity or establish identity or to hold on to identity. That leads to paradoxical responses. One response is for people to try to hold on much tighter to an identity. So fundamentalism. Whether its Christian fundamentalism or Hebrew fundamentalism, Irish fundamentalism, Unionist fundamentalism. Its easy to say then, well there isn't a problem because I'm really sure of what I am and what I believe. Another way to deal with it is to just go with the flow and not care so much. Both of this relates back to the question of trauma and victim identity. Another way in which people do this is by taking on an identity as one which is very alienated one. The world is out there and it comes at me and I'm really unsure about where I stand in the world. I think when you start to look at it like that, it suggests the reason why there is a concern about identity today is because there's a breakdown in the sense of what humans can achieve. There's a retreat from the sense that humans can act on the world and impact the world and make the world and change the world. And I think that tied in a lot of complex ways with breakdown of political ideologies, the decline of collectible organizations, so people tend to experience the world more as isolated individuals. So I haven't answered your question but I suppose the question was, why is there an interest in identity today and I think that's something psychologists aren't well placed to ask, or often don't ask because their interest lies in what's the content of identity or what kinds of identities do people have, not why are we interested in identity.

55:50

Student with question: I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about what you do in the role of employment opportunities and sort of identity, with where the Troubles are now and where they might be headed. I think Ashley wrote some notes about a conversation she had with a director about placement about how there are more good jobs for young people. And we have another speaker who commented negatively on the influx of immigrants into the Derry area and how they are taking a lot of entry level jobs and positions making fewer positions available for young people. Thinking about what you said how older people are more likely to have jobs and how unemployment is rising among the young that seems a little ominous to me. I'm worried that might lead to people with nothing better to do then kind of join paramilitaries. What do you think, what do you think is going to happen in terms of employment opportunities? Is it not as big a deal as I'm worried it might be?

Chris: It's like 20 questions, I'll give you that, so I'm trying to decide which to answer first. In terms of employment opportunities actually, the NI economy in terms of employment is probably healthier than its been since the mid 70s. Unemployment is about 6% which is low historically in NI. In terms of youth unemployment, it's not that there's a growth in youth unemployment, it's that

strata of the employment, those of employable age are more likely to be unemployed because they are making transitions into the workforce. They're more likely to have casual work, temporary work, part time work. In the UK there's been a growth in third level education which has been sort of a buffer for that youth unemployment. Post compulsory education, so from 16,17 onwards. Like the tech universities, post \*searches for words\* do you have that where its compulsory until age 16 or 17 then after that its not compulsory. Its the same in the UK but the British government is trying to have 50% of all school leavers in further education whether at university or college. That seems to be acting as a buffer between, in terms of transition into the labor market. So the way I experience it is lecture rooms that are half empty because half the students are working in a coffee bar or still asleep from work or a nightclub the night before. A lot of young people are full time students and part time employed and having to do that to pay for education.

The point you make, that the taxi driver said that if young people worked that would make a big difference, I think that is the case. It's like that old adage the devil makes work for idle hands. If you haven't got a job to be involved in then you'll find something to get involved in. Though I wouldn't think that necessarily means paramilitary activity. Probably more means drinking and drugs and hanging around on the streets rather than paramilitary involvement. I'm not sure how to relate any of this to identity or the question you asked which asks how it relates to identity.

Student: I don't think there really is a connection.

Chris: If you give me a little bit longer I could probably think of a connection. But not off the top of my head.

1:00:50

Milofsky: I think we've kind of run out of gas so let's get coffee and come back together in twenty minutes. The tape ended.