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Celtic Ties That Bind? An Examination of Scotland's
Influence on Northern Ireland Politics Following the
Scottish Independence Referendum



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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield for the
degree of MSc by Research (Human and Health Sciences) F/T

University of Huddersfield

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This Master's study is dedicated to Sheila Mary Brook. I did it mum xx

Main cover photo courtesy of Forged In Ulster @ flickr.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the current political and cultural relationship that exists between Northern Ireland and Scotland following the Scottish independence referendum. It utilises semi-structured interviews conducted with senior Northern Irish political elites from across the political spectrum to examine their perceptions not only with regard to the referendum but also in relation to the institutional and non-institutional links that exist between both countries, the aim being to discover how politically significant these connections currently are. The research focused initially on the interaction of Northern Ireland's politicians with the referendum and centred on their approaches to the campaign and reactions to the result. It then examined in turn the perceptions of political elites to matters such as inter-governmental relations, policy making and issues of culture and identity. Overall, the study finds that there is resonance of such connections for politicians in Northern Ireland yet due to the entrenched ethno-centric nature of politics in the region, they attach little political significance to such links. Therefore, the key recommendation for this study is that if these ties between Northern Ireland and Scotland are to be explored and developed, then it is proposed that civil society organisations rather than the political elite be the ones to engage in such a project.

List of interviewees

- 1) Jim Allister MLA- Leader of the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV)
- 2) Stephen Barr- Senior Policy Advisor to Mike Nesbitt, Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)
- 3) Professor John Barry- Former leader of the Green Party of Northern Ireland (GPNI) and current serving councillor (Ards and North Down)
- 4) John Dallat MLA- current Deputy Speaker, Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)
- 5) David Ford MLA- Leader of the Alliance Party in Northern Ireland (APNI) and current Minister for Justice
- 6) David McNarry MLA- Leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party in Northern Ireland (UKIPNI)
- 7) Caitriona Ruane MLA- Chief Whip for Sinn Fein and former Minister for Education
- 8) Claire Sugden MLA- Independent Unionist
- 9) Jim Wells MLA- Minister for Health, Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)

Chapter One: Introduction

Background and context

On Thursday 18th September 2014 the people of Scotland were asked ‘should Scotland be an independent country?’ Their decision to reject independence by a margin of 55% to 44% (Cairney, 2015) was met by a collective sigh of unionist relief. Ultimately, the eleventh-hour attempts by British unionists to offer a form of ‘devo-max’ to the Scots as an alternative to full independence saw them victorious (Trench, 2014) yet simultaneously, in the eyes of nationalists the relative closeness of the vote also provided a certain amount of hope. Therefore, rather than settling the issue of Scottish independence for at least a generation, there is a consensus that the referendum has in fact generated more questions than answers and the future of the Union continues to be uncertain (Cairney, 2015; Jeffery, 2015; Keating, 2015). Indeed, a second independence referendum remains on the political agenda of the Scottish National Party (SNP) (ibid). As a significant event in United Kingdom (UK) politics, the referendum had the potential to affect all of its constituent nations regardless of the outcome. In the context of the possible significant connections that exist between Scotland and Northern Ireland, the purpose of this study is to discover whether this event did indeed resonate with Northern Ireland and in particular with the region’s politicians whilst simultaneously providing a closer examination of the current political and cultural relationship which exists between the two countries.

The Scottish independence referendum had profound implications for Northern Ireland given its potential for stimulating nationalism across the UK. Cartrite, (2012) for instance argues that Scottish secession would have impacted on Ulster more than anywhere else in the UK. Although this would have been felt more acutely within the unionist community, the inherent ethnic polarisation of Northern Irish politics and wider society meant that the potential for any stimulation of Irish nationalism either during or following the referendum could also have proved and may yet prove to be problematic for the province. Moreover, the coincidence of the timing of the referendum alongside numerous political crises in the region (the impasse on welfare reform and the failure of the Haass initiative) had the potential to further destabilise the region (Bell, 2014; Bradbury, 2015; Trench, 2014). Further, an increasingly Anglo-centric aspect to UK devolution following potential Scottish independence may have led to further isolation for Northern Ireland (Cumbers, 2014; Jeffery, 2015; Keating, 2014) and any resulting rise in English nationalism could have prompted a backlash against the remaining Celtic nations in as much as the English may not have wished to continue to support them (Cartrite, 2012). This remains particularly pertinent for Northern Ireland as they are deemed by many to benefit substantially from the current devolutionary arrangements and the Barnett Formula in particular (see for instance Bell, 2015; McLean, 2000; Midwinter, 2000).

Despite the numerous and significant implications of potential Scottish secession, Northern Ireland became marginalised in relation to the referendum. Indeed, aside from an initial exchange of views by Lord Empey and Martin McGuinness to affirm the unionist and nationalist positions on Scottish independence at the outset of the referendum launch, (Bell, 2014) Northern Ireland's political involvement in the referendum campaign and wider debate was minimal (Bell, 2014; Bradbury, 2015; Keating, 2014). This was largely due to their deliberate exclusion from both the Yes Scotland and the Better Together campaigns (Bradbury, 2015; Keating, 2014) who wished to promote a modern and multicultural vision of Scotland and thus disassociate with Northern Ireland's entrenched sectarian politics. Some involvement occurred in the form of support from Northern Ireland's Orange Order towards the latter stage of the referendum campaign but this was much diluted as their counterparts in Scotland had also been excluded from the Better Together campaign (Keating, 2014) and had thus formed their own group 'British Together' (McKillop, 2014). All politicians in Northern Ireland were mindful that any overt political interference in the referendum would be unhelpful to their counterparts on either side of the campaign and thus were largely satisfied for the democratic nature of the referendum to play out and for the Scots to determine their own future. This approach also applied to Sinn Féin whose Nationalist aspirations were not the same as those advanced by those in the 'yes' campaign (Bradbury, 2015) and who appeared to be aware that their 'divisive associations' would not be helpful to the cause of the SNP (Bell, 2014).

The majority of political comment and media discussion at the time of the referendum and in the immediate aftermath appeared to focus primarily on the effect the vote would have on England. This myopia was also replicated within academia where the predominance of the English votes for English laws (EVEL) debate that occurred throughout the referendum campaign prompted a significant proportion of scholarly attention (see Hayton, 2015; Hazell, 2006; Hazell & Sandford, 2015; McLean, Gallagher & Lodge, 2013 amongst others). Understandably, some scholars focused exclusively on the likely effect the referendum would have on Scotland itself (see Keating, 2015). Cairney (2015) for instance discussed the implications of new powers for Scotland following the referendum result. He does however advocate the use of Scotland as an example by which to stimulate comparative research amongst regions with similar secessionist tendencies yet this is largely taken up by scholars with a focus on Europe (see for example Dardanelli & Mitchell, 2014; Lineira & Cetra, 2015). Equally, comparisons are drawn between Scotland and Wales due to the similarities in their respective devolutionary arrangements with the latter also featuring relatively frequently in the literature alongside England and Scotland (see for example Henderson, Jeffery & Lineira, 2015). Northern Ireland, although mentioned somewhat briefly by some almost as an afterthought to justify a UK-wide perspective was largely overlooked.

This significant lack of enquiry is lamentable given the broad yet complex and intricate relationship that exists between Northern Ireland and Scotland in terms of geography, history, politics and culture. As Walker (2010) argues that historically, the influence of the Northern Irish example of devolution on Scottish debates has been hitherto overlooked, so contemporary questions regarding Scotland's secession from the Union largely failed to adequately examine and assess the impact that such a phenomenon would have on Northern Ireland. That said, it is widely acknowledged that the nature of post-devolution politics in Northern Ireland holds a unique position in the wider context of UK politics (see for example Shirlow, 2001). Fundamental differences in the purpose and implementation of the devolution arrangements which exist alongside a marked level of incongruence between Northern Irish and British state-wide parties immediately set it apart from other constituent nations of the UK (Birrell, 2010; Coakley, 2011; Knox & Carmichael, 2010, Shirlow, 2001). This has prompted Jeffery's (2009, p.299) observation that Northern Ireland has 'an entirely distinctive local party system and a form of proportional government which in principle favours a politics of localism rather than engagement with the wider issues at play in UK politics'. As a result a large proportion of scholars view the region as an exception or an anomaly which is difficult to quantify within a UK-wide perspective (Bogdanor, 2010; Cartrite, 2012; Knox & Carmichael, 2010; Paterson, 2002). Therefore the wider literature concerned with devolution and constitution exhibits a predominantly British focus.

Where there was discussion on Northern Ireland, there appeared to be agreement that the referendum result had only a minimal impact on the region. Bradbury, (2015) argues that this was due to their exclusion from the campaign and wider debate. Politically, he states that the effects of the renewed debate on devolution which followed the 'no' vote merely resulted in more talks for Northern Ireland which aimed to address legacy issues as well as the budget. An extra 2 billion pounds were supplied by the UK government to solve welfare problems and talks ultimately led to the Stormont House Agreement which was signed by all parties in December 2014 (Bradbury, 2015, p.16). Trench (2014) largely concurs, highlighting the fact that plans to devolve corporation tax to Northern Ireland were shelved until the Executive resumed normal function. As a result Trench (2014) sees resolving the impasse over welfare reform as being the most pressing concern for Northern Ireland following the referendum. Jeffery (2015) is sensitive to the fact that constitutional debates were also occurring in Wales and Northern Ireland at the time of the referendum. He argues that a complex and unpredictable 'constitutional chain reaction' has ensued from the referendum which may spill over into other regions of the UK. However, he sees any future threat to the Union as being likely to originate in Scotland particularly if the pro-independence momentum is maintained by increasing support for the SNP and the decline of Scottish Labour. Cartrite (2012) is also clear that any stimulation of nationalism which would result from the referendum would apply primarily to Scotland and Wales and not Northern Ireland and that a 'no' result which involves

anything less than 'devo-max' would have minimal impact on both unionists and nationalists in the province. She also finds that 'the holding of the Scottish referendum would have little or no demonstration effect in Northern Ireland' (Cartrite, 2012, p.527). This would be true for both unionists and nationalists and as such she argues that their dichotomous relationship would be unlikely to change.

Wood (2014) argues that there has been little consideration afforded to the issue of culture and identity following the referendum either in Scotland or the rest of Britain. This stemmed from 'an underlying sense that a 'no' vote was inevitable or that if, on the off-chance that independence did occur, this would not affect the rest of Britain' (ibid, p.40). Several scholars highlight the connection of unionists to Scotland by means of their Ulster-Scots identity, a link which has arguably taken on an increased political significance since the GFA in 1998 (Bell, 2014; Cartrite, 2012). In terms of its significance to the referendum, Bell, (2014) points out that 'culturally, the Northern Irish Protestants and unionists revere their Scottish ancestry and connections and look to Scotland as their kin.' This view is also shared by Keating (2014) who argues that the loyalty of unionists 'to their kith and kin in Western Scotland, and shared cultural and religious conditions' is equal only to that shown to the Queen. He also highlights the historical significance of the link between western Scotland and Northern Ireland which for hundreds of years has been 'one social space, with only a few miles of sea between them' (Keating, 2014). Both scholars agree that a potential 'yes' vote would have had a significant negative impact on unionists in Northern Ireland and could have resulted in a further diminution of their Britishness (Cartrite, 2012).

Conceptual Framework

The starting point of this project was the imbalance noted above in media and academic discussion of the referendum. An extensive review of the literature identified a range of possible connections between Northern Ireland and Scotland, both institutional and cultural which suggested that an examination of ties between different parts of the UK which did not start with England as a baseline was worthwhile. However, there were also gaps in the literature and much information had to be intuited from separate bodies of writing about both Northern Ireland and Scotland. Crucially, there was a distinct dearth of significant literature which examined either the current political or cultural relationship between Scotland and Northern Ireland or which evaluated the relative significance of any potential links.

In order to collect some original primary data that could allow for analysis of these possible 'ties that bind', representatives of political parties sitting in the Northern Ireland Assembly at the time of the 2014 referendum were approached for interview. These party political elites were chosen because they were most likely to have relevant experience of the institutional links resulting from devolution and the wider UK framework of governance. As representatives of political unionism and

nationalism, as well as non-aligned parties, their perspectives would reflect some of the key dynamics of politics and identity in Northern Ireland and so would allow for the observation of any emotional resonance of connections with Scotland as well as provide insight into formal political connections.

After reviewing relevant literature, the information gleaned from current academic discussion led to the formulation of three research questions which could be answered through the chosen methodology of qualitative semi-structured interviews. These were:

1. What do reactions to the referendum highlight about how unionist, nationalist and non-aligned political perspectives interact with political developments in Scotland?
2. How significant are formal party, institutional and policy links between Scotland and Northern Ireland for Northern Ireland's politicians?
3. How significant are cultural links and connections between Scotland and Northern Ireland for Northern Ireland's politicians?

Aims and objectives

By bringing academic discussion on the subject of Scotland and Northern Ireland's relationship together and collecting and analysing primary data, this project has been designed to make an original contribution to this under-researched area of national identity and multi-level politics in the UK. To do this the following set of aims and objectives were devised.

Aims:

1. To gain an understanding of the political dynamics of the UK from a less Anglo-centric perspective.
2. To develop a critical overview of possible connections between Scotland and Northern Ireland and their contemporary resonance.
3. To contribute to knowledge by addressing an under-researched element of identity and politics in the UK.

Objectives:

1. To create a qualitative research project that provides knowledge on the significance of Scotland to contemporary Northern Irish politics.
2. To explore perceptions and perspectives from unionist, nationalist and non-aligned politicians in the context of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum.

3. To make recommendations for the study of devolution in the UK from a marginalised perspective.

Guide to the thesis

The literature review follows this chapter followed by chapter three which outlines the methodology underpinning the project. The thesis then looks systematically at the possible significant links between Scotland and Northern Ireland which were identified in the literature review and carries out an analysis of the primary data. The final chapter containing the conclusion of the thesis sets out the answers to the research questions and the findings of the project. It then finishes with reflections on avenues for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Issues of sub-state nationalism in the UK and the impact of devolution have been subjects of extensive academic research in both Scotland and Northern Ireland. However, as outlined in the introduction direct comparisons are much rarer, in part because of the difficulties of the dynamics of conflict in Northern Ireland and its distinctive system. Despite this, some important work that makes direct comparisons, particularly in terms of historical and cultural ties, has been produced and it is also possible to identify potential connections from bodies of literature that concentrate on Scotland and Northern Ireland alone, or which assess the impact of devolution across the UK.

In order to provide a comprehensive overview of relevant academic discussion, this review has been organised to explore potential connections and their relative significance. These themes will be split into two primary sets of links, one political and institutional in nature and one that focuses on familial and cultural links. The meaning and resonance of these connections will be explored and it will be shown that they do have potential significance in terms of both identity and policy, something that will then be explored with analysis of the semi-structured interviews collected for the project. The review will conclude with a discussion of the gaps in the literature which this project has been designed to address in order to make a contribution to knowledge on this subject.

Political and Institutional Links

The implementation of Devolution

It is widely held that the introduction of devolution to the UK promised 'new institutions, new processes and a new political culture' (Mitchell, 2000, p.605) and became described as an era of 'new politics' in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Bradbury & Mitchell, 2001). This would be based on a more consensual style of politics in Scotland and a consociational agreement in Northern Ireland which required cooperation between all parties in government in order to be able to move forward. The second hope was for policy innovation. Expectations for Scotland were high in this regard in that 'innovation in institutional procedures would bring about a more open and collaborative style of decision making and produce distinctive policy outcomes' (see also Mitchell, 1998, 2000). Rather less was expected in Northern Ireland although it was hoped that in time the policy framework would become much less dependent on the UK (Bradbury & Mitchell, 2001, p.257, see also Jeffery, 2009).

The fundamental difference in the origins of the political systems of Scotland and Northern Ireland is highlighted by Jeffery (2009) who points out that Scottish devolution arose from over 10 years of campaigning of the Constitutional

Convention, a group which consisted of a broad mix of political parties (Labour, the Liberal Democrats and to a lesser extent, the SNP) and civil bodies such as the church, trade unions and academics. All were unhappy at being represented by a largely remote and 'unresponsive' Westminster which was seen as being at odds with Scottish national identity and as such they wished to assert their 'claim of right' from the wider representation of the UK constitution (Jeffery, 2009, p.292/3). In contrast, devolution in Northern Ireland stemmed from the peace process and involved a series of 'initiatives designed to pacify conflict in a divided society' the main aim of devolution being to provide political stability 'to contain inter-communal conflict between pro-British Protestants and pro-Irish Catholics', avoid direct rule and encourage and nurture cooperation between the North and South of Ireland (Jeffery, 2009, p.294). He argues that there are certain similarities in terms of powers between Scotland and Northern Ireland but ultimately the fundamental difference is that devolution in Northern Ireland is based on a consociational form of governance which relies on power-sharing and is therefore dependent on agreement between political parties. (For a discussion of consociationalism please see Taylor, (2009) and also Horowitz, (2002)).

The 'success' of devolution is the subject of much continuing debate. However, there appears to be a general consensus that particularly in the early stages of devolution, expectations were unrealistically high and were therefore not met. Indeed, according to Mitchell (2000) the very concept of 'new politics' has not been adequately defined from the outset (see also Bennie, Denver, Mitchell & Bradbury, 2001). Bradbury & Mitchell (2001, p.257) argue that in the early years of devolution 'evidence of new politics is limited' with animosity between parties in both nations leading to little in the way of consensus. Indeed, they describe devolution in Northern Ireland as a 'paradox' which has 'strengthened the extremes' leading them to conclude that the consociational system has delivered peace to the region but does not accommodate 'normal politics' (Bradbury & Mitchell, 2001, p.267). Essentially it has cemented the polarised nature of politics in Northern Ireland. The lack of consensus amongst elites is therefore problematic and leads Bradbury & Mitchell (2001) to advance a largely negative appraisal of devolution in the early years. Moreover, the lack of agreement between Northern Ireland's political parties meant that failure was a real possibility and the frequent suspensions of devolution reflect its 'shaky existence' (Bradbury & Mitchell, (2001, p.268) and see also Mitchell & Bradbury, 2004; Jeffery, 2009).

More recently, the literature appears to suggest that there has been a shift towards a more consensual-style approach to policy making in Scotland (Birrell & Heenan, 2013 and see also Cairney, 2008; Keating et al, 2009). However, most scholars agree that the consociational nature of politics in Northern Ireland continue to hamper the progress of the region in terms of effective policy making. Indeed, the election of the DUP and Sinn Féin in 2007 as the two largest unionist and nationalist parties lies at the heart of the current political instability in Northern Ireland (Birrell &

Heenan, 2013; Gray & Birrell, 2012; Horgan & Gray, 2012). Bradbury (2015) for example describes the current political arrangements as being 'not amenable to either party' given that they occupy the extreme right and left respectively of the political spectrum and remains problematic 'while each fights hard for political ascendancy to win the long term battle of hearts and minds for a united Ireland on one side and continued union with the rest of the UK on the other' (Bradbury, 2015, p.12). As a result, he states that 'Northern Irish devolution has developed on the basis of the politics of a stable instability' (ibid).

Party and Inter-governmental Connections

Most scholars agree that inter-governmental relations (IGR) in the UK are conducted largely on an informal and *ad hoc* basis (Jeffery, 2009; Swenden & McEwen, 2014; Trench, 2014). With the exception of Birrell, (2012) there is a distinct dearth of significant literature which examines IGR in Northern Ireland and to date there has been no attempt to evaluate the extent of IGR between the province and Scotland following the Scottish independence referendum. Perhaps the main reason for this glaring omission lies in the fact that Northern Ireland presents as a unique case in terms of UK IGR as under the terms of The 1998 Agreement, the government of Northern Ireland relates to both the British and Irish governments (Birrell, 2012; Swenden & McEwen, 2014). In addition, as IGR under the prolonged period of Direct Rule was largely minimal (see also Horgan, 2003), the new institutions that were set up following The Agreement, whilst playing an important role in proceedings also meant that a period of transition was required for them to become sufficiently embedded in. However, as the early years of devolution were marked by numerous break downs and suspensions, developing IGR was low on the Executive's priority list. As a result Birrell (2012) argues that IGR is of more symbolic importance to parties in Northern Ireland rather than the outcomes they achieve.

There is also a general consensus that the issue of political incongruence has become increasingly salient with regards to UK IGR following the devolved elections of 2007 (Birrell, 2012; Jeffery, 2009; Swenden & McEwen, 2014). Indeed, following the election of an SNP majority government in Scotland, Labour minority in Wales, a cross-party coalition of five in Northern Ireland and a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in Westminster at the 2010 General Election, this represented full party incongruence at all levels (Swenden & McEwen, 2014, p.490/1). Many argue that such incongruence has thrown into relief the underdeveloped nature of UK IGR and its ability to facilitate and resolve potential disputes between constituent nations (Jeffery, 2009; Swenden & McEwen, 2014). Whilst efforts to institutionalise IGR were made by the new SNP government in Scotland, institutional bodies such as the British-Irish Council (BIC) and the Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) are still regarded as being largely under-used (see Coakley, 2014; Jeffery, 2009). This has led many scholars to argue that a more formal approach to UK IGR is needed to be

able to cope with the increasing demands of devolution and the potential for territorial disputes (Jeffery, 2009; Swenden & McEwen, 2014; Trench, 2014).

According to Birrell, (2012, p.282) the uniqueness of the party system in Northern Ireland represents permanent political incongruence with both centre and periphery relationships. Moreover, as incongruence is expected with a UK government, parties in Northern Ireland have traditionally been unconcerned with the political composition of the Westminster government (ibid). Another problem presents in that due to the consociational nature of power-sharing in the region, representation of Northern Ireland in IGR is multi-party and therefore will always be represented by unionists and nationalists (and more recently the Alliance Party) so the potential for disputes in IGR arenas is always present. This, accordingly to Birrell, (2012, p.270) presents an additional problem in that 'the context of deep ideological and historic cleavages between parties has a major influence on attitudes towards IGR'. He argues that whilst nationalists have become increasingly involved in IGR following devolution and consent to participate in fora such as the BIC, unionist parties (particularly the DUP and UUP) remain suspicious of North/South bodies such as the North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC). Incongruence is therefore present and potentially problematic at all levels of IGR in Northern Ireland (Birrell, 2012).

The British-Irish Council (BIC)

The intergovernmental body of the BIC originated from strand three of The Agreement and was designed to reassure unionists of their links to Britain yet also placate their desire to counterbalance the North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC) with a body firmly rooted in British rather than Irish foundations (Birrell, 2012; Bogdanor, 1999; Fanning, 2005). Essentially, the 'Council of the Isles' as unionists preferred to term it, placed the future relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland within a 'British Isles context' (Lynch & Hopkins, 2001, p.753). Swenden & McEwen (2014) argue that the BIC provides greater scope than other bodies such as the JMC in that it represents UK wide interests by bringing together the UK, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish governments as well as representatives from Ireland, the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey. This somewhat neutral character of the BIC is therefore deemed acceptable to both Northern Irish unionists and nationalists (Birrell, 2012). Officially, its role is 'to promote the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of the totality of relationships among the people of these islands' (Bogdanor, 1999, p.288; Nolan, 2012, p.132) the intention being to create a forum for cooperation and exchange of ideas in an East-West setting of governance (Birrell, 2012; Lynch & Hopkins, 2001). Indeed, it was thought the BIC may play an important role in future relations between all nations in the UK (Mitchell, 2000, p.74).

Most scholars agree that the initial progress of the BIC was slow (Bogdanor, 1999; Coakley, 2014; Lynch & Hopkins, 2001) and had been hampered by suspension

(Fanning, 2005). However, some concede that its output has improved albeit modestly with summits and regular meetings being held both at ministerial and administrative level and more importantly, being well attended by all constituent members (Birrell, 2012; Coakley, 2014; Swenden & McEwen, 2014). On the whole, Birrell (2012) paints a largely positive picture of the BIC and argues that overall, it has been a success. He highlights the fact that it continued to function throughout the period of suspension of the Northern Ireland Executive and notes that following their return in 2007 there has been an expansion of work programs and an added purpose to proceedings which is reflected in the establishment of permanent headquarters of the Council in Edinburgh (Birrell, 2012 and see also Coakley, 2014). Indeed, he highlights the UK Child Poverty Act 2010 as having originated in BIC meetings and states that most of the intergovernmental agreement from Northern Ireland originates in the BIC. Moreover, as he feels that the BIC has not been dominated by either the British or Irish governments, Birrell (2012, p.281) argues that 'a strong practical policy focus has assisted in avoiding party political ideological constraints.' Birrell's (2012) largely positive appraisal of the BIC stands in some contrast to the views of many scholars. Whilst some concede that the BIC has 'facilitated contact' (Coakley, 2014, p.93) and may well be increasing in scope and range, (Swenden & McEwen, 2014, p.496) for many 'it remains mainly a symbol of cooperation and communication rather than co-decision' (ibid).

In contrast to Birrell, (2012) Fanning (2005, p.137) interprets the fact that the BIC continued to meet during the suspensions of the Northern Irish government as Northern Ireland being 'largely peripheral to the process' and therefore not a primary concern of either the British or Irish governments. He argues that the limitations of the BIC are largely institutional but have also been hindered by political factors; the most significant being that unionists believed that participation in the BIC would generate sympathy for their cause particularly amongst the Scots and the Welsh, as Irish nationalists have found in their dealings with the Republic of Ireland in the NSMC. This has not transpired and as such he feels that unionists may ultimately lose interest in the BIC. Fanning (2005, p.139) also suggests that the fundamental and ideological differences between unionists in Northern Ireland and the SNP have contributed to this with Scottish nationalism having 'little to gain and much to lose from any identification with Ulster's unionists'. He goes on to describe the relationship between Northern Irish unionists and Scottish and Welsh nationalists as being tense and he expects unionists backing for the BIC will quickly dissipate with rising nationalism. Fanning (2005, p.141) concludes that 'the workings of the BIC have been incidental, rather than fundamental, to the improvement in the East-West intergovernmental relationship.' Moreover, he argues that none of the other participants in the BIC are interested in the defensive, London-oriented position of Ulster unionists and therefore concludes that 'the dynamic for the successful functioning of the BIC...derives largely from the enthusiasm and the commitment of the devolved governments *other* than the government of Northern Ireland' (ibid).

Although writing some time before the Northern Ireland Executive was re-established in 2007, many of Fanning's (2005) points particularly with regard to rising Scottish nationalism and the relationship dynamic between Northern Irish unionists and the SNP, remain salient today. Indeed, as Nolan (2012, p.133) states that 'the agenda of the BIC is of peripheral interest to the main parties-including unionists', this assessment appears to confirm Fanning's (2005) earlier suggestion that unionists may indeed have lost interest in the BIC. As this theory stands in direct contrast to that of Birrell, (2012) it will be interesting to discover just how influential the BIC is to all Northern Irish parties and whether party political incongruence has become increasingly problematic between Scotland and Northern Ireland in terms of IGR following the independence referendum.

Birrell, (2012) states that IGR in Northern Ireland take place in institutional as well as informal and *ad hoc* formats. Thus IGR between Northern Ireland and Scotland is conducted both as devolved IGR (which involves the JMC, devolved summits, bilateral First Minister meetings, quadrilateral ministerial meetings and trilateral ministerial meetings of devolved ministers) and also as East-West IGR in the form of the British-Irish Council (BIC). He argues that devolved summits involving the leaders of devolved nations are infrequent as are ministerial meetings although more recently in times of austerity, meetings between finance ministers have become more common. Quadrilateral meetings have taken place on issues such as the environment and agriculture and are more common than trilateral meetings of devolved ministers. Regular financial quadrilateral meetings now take place (see also Swenden & McEwen, 2014). Trilateral meetings of ministers usually have a single purpose with the intention of agreeing a position with which to lobby the UK government and have also largely focused on economic matters. Birrell, (2012, p.275/6) states that the most common form of meeting is bilateral between First Ministers and ministerial colleagues but that they are more 'low key' and usually revolve around specific issues of policy and the exchange of information.

Swenden & McEwen (2014, p.488) argue that the asymmetrical nature of devolution in the UK 'is conducive to bilateral and weakly institutionalised IGR' and this has perpetuated since 1999. They highlight the existence of multilateral bodies of cooperation such as the JMC and the BIC which have become more developed since 2007. However, they state that IGR in these bodies is significantly less important and frequent than bilateral meetings between the devolved nation and the UK government. They do point out that inter-ministerial meetings outside of IGR bodies have been conducted since the early years of devolution and particularly in times of crisis (Swenden & McEwen, 2014, p.495). Moreover, some *ad hoc* meetings are held albeit infrequently within the 'Celtic forum', however their main argument is that 'the asymmetrical distribution of competences, coupled with the distinctive political systems and institutions in each case, mean that the devolved administrations rarely share common interests that would drive a structure of

multilateral coordination on a horizontal basis' (ibid, p.496). Birrell, (2012, p.281) appears to agree that there is a lack of common interest amongst the devolved nations and states that 'joint actions by the devolved leaders are not so common'. However, he highlights the fact that in 2010 they issued an 'unprecedented' joint declaration which opposed the plans of the UK government to cut public spending. This was followed up a year later and resulted in a letter being sent to the Chancellor regarding the support of economic growth (ibid). This willingness to cooperate to oppose the UK government's austerity measures is acknowledged by Swenden & McEwen, (2014) to be the exception to an otherwise lack of common interest. Although Birrell, (2012) points out that both the DUP and Sinn Féin have found common ground in challenging austerity measures, the lack of common cause between devolved nations leads him to conclude that the most significant amount of inter-governmental agreement originates from Northern Ireland's involvement in the BIC. These views appear to suggest that aside from some mutual cooperation on anti-austerity measures, the scope for IGR between Scotland and Northern Ireland is limited. Moreover, there appears to be some disagreement as to the extent of IGR conducted in bodies such as the BIC yet, this area remains understudied in the context of the referendum and aftermath, a gap that this thesis will seek to address.

Party political linkage

Birrell (2012, p.272) highlights the fact that the party system in Northern Ireland is 'wholly distinctive' to that which exists in the rest of the UK as all political parties are non-state-wide. One notable exception to this was the unsuccessful attempt by the UUP to ally with the Conservative Party in the General Election of 2010 and which is unlikely to be repeated (McGlynn, Tonge & McAuley, 2014). The SDLP has a 'sisterly link' with The Labour Party, and Alliance has loose links with the Liberal Democrats. Of the two largest parties, the DUP has no formal links with British parties and Sinn Féin has no links at all (Birrell, 2012, p.272). This absence of state-wide parties also largely precludes Northern Ireland from debates on post-devolution party strategy as most scholars continue to focus largely on its effects on state-wide parties (see for example Bratberg, 2010; Deschouwer, 2003; Dunleavy, 2005; Hopkin & Bradbury, 2006; Hough & Jeffery, 2003). Jeffery (2009, p.299) laments the continuing focus on state-wide parties across the literature yet acknowledges the difficulties which present when extending such debate to Northern Ireland, observing that the province has 'an entirely distinctive local party system and a form of proportional government which in principle favours a politics of localism rather than engagement with the wider issues at play in UK politics.'

According to Hepburn & McLoughlin (2011, p.386) Northern Ireland parties are rarely, if ever compared to those in Great Britain. They argue that this is largely due to the fact that Northern Ireland is seen as 'a deviant case' and an exception to wider UK politics and as a post-conflict region typified by ethnic cleavage, most scholars choose instead to compare Northern Ireland with other conflict regions such as the

Basque Country or Palestine. As a result, by examining the strategies of the SNP and the SDLP, Hepburn and McLoughlin (2011) make one of the first detailed comparisons of party strategy to consider Northern Ireland and which also examines strategies between devolved nations of the UK. The study explores how both parties have used Europe to advance their own nationalist agendas within the context of devolution. They find that both the SNP and SDLP share many similarities in that 'they have a social democratic character, and correspondingly have employed a liberal and progressive nationalist discourse'. Indeed, as the SNP has advanced itself as an inclusive 'civic nationalist party', they note that the SDLP also tries to promote an inclusive brand of Irish nationalism (Hepburn & McLoughlin, 2011, p.392). Historically, both parties have fluctuated in their approaches to Europe, unsure as how it would best serve their interests yet largely seeking to utilise the framework of the European Union (EU) as a replacement for that of the UK in the event that their respective political goals were to become realised. They find that more recently, in recognition of increasing Euroscepticism in the UK the SNP has slightly altered its position on Europe by becoming increasingly critical of the integration project. However, the SDLP has not, remaining very much pro-integration despite losing out electorally to their nationalist rivals Sinn Féin who, although supporters of the EU are also critical of it; a stance which appears to currently resonate with Northern Ireland's nationalist electorate (ibid). This suggests that there are different political trends within the two regions with Scotland perhaps being more responsive than Northern Ireland to state-wide events.

Policy making

In terms of policy, Bradbury & Mitchell (2001, p.268) identify Scotland as being provided with the widest scope of all nations for policy innovation (see also Mitchell, 1998, 2000). They note that the Scottish parliament 'was established with novel roles for committees-both as policy makers assisting the Executive and as scrutinisers of the Executive'. However, they point out that the system was not without initial problem as committees required tweaking (due to being insufficiently staffed and resourced) and therefore produced a mixed bag of results. Despite describing Scottish policy making as being largely successful they argue that the scope for policy initiative did not meet initial expectations due to the continued retention of some powers at Westminster and the reality of financial constraints. Put simply, lots of Scottish policy was generated but most of it was run of the mill.

In contrast, according to Bradbury & Mitchell (2001, p.273) the lack of consensus in Northern Ireland generated little in the way of public policy initiatives in the early years of devolution which due to the frequent suspensions of the Executive, continued to rely on Westminster. Indeed, they state 'that a policy deficit existed alongside a democratic deficit in Northern Ireland'. However, McGlynn & McAuley (2011) identified an early period of distinctive policy making (such as resistance to New Labour's use of markets and private involvement in public services) in the first

incarnation of the Assembly. Bradbury & Mitchell (2001, p.274) concede that some long-standing issues such as the 11+ exam were finally debated but that the progress of devolution in Northern Ireland was slow. That said, the authors consider that the 'move away from paramilitary activity is remarkable' and that the achievement of peace can still be regarded as considerable progress (ibid).

More recently, the literature appears to suggest that there has been a shift towards a more consensual-style approach to policy making in Scotland (Birrell & Heenan, 2013 and see also Cairney, 2008; Keating et al, 2009). However, there remains a lack of literature concerned with policy style in Northern Ireland and in particular with regard to policy transfer between Scotland and Northern Ireland (Birrell, 2012; Birrell & Heenan, 2013; Gray & Birrell, 2012). Birrell & Heenan (2013) for instance find that there is no distinct policy style in Northern Ireland and evidence for consensual policy making is limited. They argue that consociationalism continues to constrain consensual policy-making and therefore the system in Northern Ireland differs markedly from that which exists in Scotland. The authors find that policy impasses and 'unilateral decision making by Ministers' hamper consensual policy making and this has led more generally to poor policy outcomes for Northern Ireland. Similarly, Horgan & Gray (2012) writing following the 2011 election identify a 'silo mentality' where ministers from all parties guard 'fiefdoms' acting unilaterally and protecting budgets with little inter-departmental cooperation. They describe the composition of the Executive and the competing ideologies of the five coalition parties and conclude that 'small wonder that there has been a virtual policy impasse at Stormont since 2007' (see also Gray & Birrell, 2012). Indeed, they describe the coalition between the DUP and Sinn Féin as 'unlikely' and the main reason why effective policy-making is difficult (Horgan & Gray, 2012, p.468/9). The authors further state that 'the principle of collective responsibility has been largely absent from policy making and implementation in Northern Ireland since devolution' and conclude that Northern Ireland has continued to copy policy from London resulting in a lack of policy of any positive significance for the people of Northern Ireland (ibid, p.470).

Keating & Cairney (2012, p.240) also highlight a lack of literature concerning policy learning in devolved nations. They argue that 'policy transfer in devolved systems...can be difficult to identify since there are many reasons why one government might adopt policies similar to those being carried out elsewhere, not all of which are to do with improving policy performance. Convergence like divergence might not even be the result of conscious decisions by policy-makers'. (ibid) The extent of policy transfer amongst devolved nations appears to be contested in the literature with many scholars highlighting numerous constraints which inhibit its development. Keating, Cairney & Hepburn (2012, p.303) for example argue that most policy learning is between the peripheries and the centre due to there being 'fewer channels and opportunities' for policy transfer between the peripheries. This view appears to be held by many scholars who see the UK system as being

conducive to creating policy divergence for three main reasons. Firstly, there are no checks on regional policy from Westminster. Secondly, IGR is largely unstructured and *ad hoc* and therefore fosters limited cooperation between regions (Trench, 2005) and thirdly, financial constraints limit policy transfer due to inequalities in the Barnett formula of funding (Schmuecker & Adams, 2005; Shaw, Mackinnon & Docherty, 2009 and see also Gallacher & Raffe, 2012).

By contrast, Birrell (2012, p.310) sees devolution as being conducive to policy transfer 'due to geographical proximity and close institutional relationships' and therefore views the BIC and JMC as playing a role in facilitating policy copying between devolved nations. Birrell, (2012, p.310) notes that 'the process and opportunity for policy copying and transfer is more likely to occur when a government is making a decision on changes or reforms to an existing system' and argues that during the reform of local government, 'policy copying has been very selective and limited to community planning, standards and relationships with the department' (ibid, p.319). Knox & Carmichael (2015, p.44) note that 'community planning has been in place within local government in England and Wales since 2000 and in Scotland from 2003.' They also state that 'the experience of Great Britain offers significant learning for Northern Ireland' (ibid). However, the authors make no specific link of policy transfer from Scotland to Northern Ireland in terms of community planning, instead choosing to focus on the considerable practical difficulties of implementing such a system to local government in the region.

Birrell, (2012) concludes that policy copying in Northern Ireland has been limited following devolution with little pressure exerted on elites to engage with it. However, he finds that some transfer has occurred between Scotland and Northern Ireland most notably in the introduction of the Children's Commissioner and the Commissioner for Older People. He further argues that Unionists are more likely to look to Scotland and Wales whilst the SDLP and Sinn Féin are less likely although as nationalist parties they tend not to look to the Republic either. Further, 'in terms of terminology, the concepts of policy copying and transfer are rarely used by the Northern Ireland polity. Preferred in most narratives is the notion of pursuing, maintaining or rejecting parity with, for example, England' (ibid, p.310).

Keating et al (2012) appear to concur citing the creation of the Children's commissioner and later the Older People's Commissioner as examples of policy transfer between the two countries. However, they add that all three devolved nations are influenced by the Republic of Ireland and particularly Northern Ireland which is encouraged to do so by way of strand two of The Agreement. Keating et al (2012) conclude that Northern Ireland under direct rule adopted policy from the centre yet there have been efforts to look at Scotland, Wales and to Europe for policy inspiration particularly in terms of public health, higher education and children's issues. Generally however, like Birrell (2012) they feel that post-devolution policy learning is lacklustre and sporadic and laboratories of democracies are yet to

emerge. Several scholars highlight further constraints which may be hampering policy transfer between Scotland and Northern Ireland. Mooney, Scott & Williams (2006) for instance argue that the retention of certain powers by Westminster limit the extent of policy transfer amongst peripheries. They also highlight the fact that there are problems specific to each region. They do not mention Northern Ireland specifically, but with problems arising from the 'troubles' and continuing sectarian division particularly in terms of health and welfare, such issues are specific to Northern Ireland and will therefore need specific policy (see also Donnelly & Osborne, 2005).

Overall there appears to be some contention across academia as to the effectiveness and significance of the institutional links that exist between Scotland and Northern Ireland. IGR is seen as being key in improving cooperation between both nations and also in facilitating the exchange of ideas yet the role and output of fora such as the BIC is disputed. Moreover, an apparent lack of common interest and absence of any substantial political linkage between Northern Ireland and the British mainland parties suggest that the scope for IGR between Scotland and Northern Ireland is limited. Such limitations would also have a negative impact on the potential for policy transfer and innovation between the two countries. In the context of this study, there appears to be a suggestion from several scholars that Northern Ireland's politicians (both unionist and nationalist) have to date, seemed largely uninterested in participating in devolved IGR with Scotland or engaging in any substantial policy transfer. This in turn raises questions as to whether the various post-Agreement institutions remain merely symbolic as suggested by Birrell, (2012) and Swenden & McEwen (2014) and moreover, that the politics of localism may still prevail in Northern Ireland (Jeffery, 2009). By examining the perceptions and attitudes of Northern Ireland's politicians to IGR, political linkage and policy making, this study will discover the current political significance of the institutional links which exist between Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Cultural and Familial Links

Migration and family

Irish emigration has only recently become increasingly well documented in the literature (Bradley, 2006). Delaney, (2014, p.128) declares that Irish emigration after 1600 was 'the most significant population movement of people in European history' when over 10 million people left the island. This diaspora was diverse in their choice of destination settling first in the Americas and the Caribbean and then later in Australasia and Africa. Delaney (2014) states that Ulster Presbyterians were the 'vanguard' in the establishment of the first British Empire in North America and further mass movement of Ulster Protestants to the 'new world' occurred from 17th and 18th century Ulster. An exodus of Catholics from the mid 19th century up until the First World War then dominates the diaspora when an estimated 8 million Irish

emigrated between the Act of Union 1801 and the partition of the island in 1920, the key reason for which appears to be the Great Famine in the middle of the 19th century.

MacRaild (2014, p.562) concurs that the 19th century saw mass migration in the form of an Irish diaspora but that migration also occurred both before and after this time. He notes that there was Ulster migration to the West coast of Scotland at the end of the 18th century and states that Ulster featured prominently in pre-modern migration, continuing to contribute throughout the 19th century. He calls this migration a 'trans-Irish Sea migratory network connecting the industrial regions of Britain with those in the north-eastern corner of Ireland' and that by the end of the 19th century the North of England, Ulster and Scotland were connected in 'an interregional economy' with inter-migration occurring between the three countries (MacRaild, 2014, p.568-70). This particular migration network formed on ease of travel with for example, Ulster migration most likely to occur to the West of Scotland although he concedes that some migrants did travel further afield. Indeed, Delaney (2007) notes that there were four major cities of Irish settlement in the 19th century- Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool and London. MacRaild (2014, p.570) states that this flow of migrants is underrepresented in the literature however, the flow from Ulster to Scotland is still recognised as a 'major arc of migration'. Walker (1995, p.9) notes that the Irish were the largest immigrant group to Scotland in the 19th and also early 20th century. As the majority of these immigrants were Catholic (approximately 75%) it is their experiences which have become well documented whilst those of the Protestant Irish remain largely unexplored. Moreover, according to Walker (1995) there is a dearth of literature which examines the emigration of Scots to Ulster during the same time period (see also Bradley, 2006).

Delaney (2014, p.132) states that following the First World War, Britain became the first choice for Irish migrants and this was largely due to greater restrictions on immigration control in America. Indeed, short distance migrations became the norm after the 1920s and many Irish returned home from America following the depression in the 1930s (Delaney, 2007). He argues that Irish migration to Scotland had been declining since the 1870s and this continued during the 1940s as many Irish were attracted to the more prosperous South East of England following the decline of heavy industry in the North. That said, in the 1950s there were approx 90,000 Irish-born in Scotland largely consisting of equal numbers of migrants from Ireland and Northern Ireland which, according to Delaney, (2007, p.17) reflects the traditional links between Ulster and Scotland. Indeed, the long-standing tradition of seasonal migration from the early 19th century onwards proved invaluable to the Scots in the lead up to the Second World War and was still in evidence in Scotland in the 1960s (ibid).

According to Delaney (2007) many post-war Irish immigrants to Britain maintained a strong sense of Irish identity with few becoming completely assimilated into the

culture of their host societies. This was due in part to 'constant interaction with the society they had left' (ibid, p.3). He notes that 'one of the characteristic features of the mass migrations of the post-war era was the interaction between migrants in Britain and friends and relatives at home' and that the 'proximity and constant movement back and forth across the Irish Sea for holidays and other visits ensured that siblings maintained contact with each other' (Delaney, 2007, p.39). Family ties therefore remained strong 'despite the obvious problems posed by distance and location' (ibid, p.40).

Migration, particularly for the Irish youth became integral to their life-cycle with emigration almost expected with their coming of age. Delaney, (2007, p.10) states that 'Post war Britain offered hope to this disenfranchised generation who had little to gain from staying in Ireland but were still close enough to maintain relationships across the Irish Sea.' Unlike others who had settled further afield in countries such as the USA and Australia the decision to migrate to Britain 'did not involve a complete rupture with the homeland and family gatherings, weddings, funerals and holidays all made for continuing interactions with Ireland' (ibid). He describes this 1950s generation of young migrants as being 'truly transnational' in that their social space 'crossed the borders of the nation-state and included family members and friends living in Britain and further afield.' Moreover, relatives who had already migrated to Britain acted as 'magnets' for further migration. Those returning home for holidays also provided much information on their host country and provided an added stimulus for some to migrate (ibid, p.27). As a result these networks of Irish migration expanded ever further as 'most young people would have known or at the very least have been aware of one relative or friend settled in Britain.' (Delaney, 2007, p.28)

Unionism

Farrington & Walker, (2009) state that there has been little comparative research conducted on the various identities within the UK. There is an extensive literature which considers Unionism in Northern Ireland (see for example Aughey, 1989; Bruce, 1986, 1994; Cochrane, 1994; Graham, 1998; Shirlow & McGovern, 1997; Southern, 2007). However, Farrington & Walker, (2009) argue that Unionism in particular has been largely misrepresented in terms of identity and its significance outside Northern Ireland has been overlooked. The authors state that in both Scotland and Northern Ireland 'Unionism finds political significance through an ideological project committed to the Union, rather than simply ethnic or instrumentalist appeals to self-interest.' Ambiguities exist in defining identities in the UK which can be described as ethnic, regional and national and which, within the UK, exist alongside a British identity (ibid, p.136/7) The authors note that both Scottish and Northern Irish unionists possess a strong British identity 'but also have varying degrees of other identities' which renders them difficult to classify (Farrington & Walker, 2009, p.137 and see also Farrington, 2001).

According to Farrington & Walker (2009, p.139) such unionism has existed in Northern Ireland since the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985 when 'Ulster Unionists argued that the Union was a multi-national and multicultural framework in which a variety of identities could co-exist and prosper'. They note that Scottish unionists are not insecure in their identity unlike unionists in Northern Ireland who, when 'faced with the prospect of an Irish nationalist political threat to their position in the Union' sought Union as protection. For Scottish unionists, English indifference to the Union has been their major frustration. The authors point out that there is a major debate as to how to define the national identity of Ulster Unionists. They argue that the relationship between Northern Ireland's unionists is asymmetrical in that 'British identity is more important to Unionists than Unionists are to British identity' (Farrington & Walker, 2009, p.140). Unionists in Northern Ireland therefore appear to be an anomalous group as they do not fit into existing models or theories. Indeed, whilst being defined by many as an ethnic group they possess 'a strong regional identity that displays many of the characteristics of a nationalist movement but which is content within its state and simultaneously expects a strong form of autonomy' (ibid, p.141).

Farrington & Walker (2009, p.142) note that the UK has developed as a plurinational state to accommodate nationalist, regional politics within it. They argue that institutions are key 'in the development of British national identity and in the development of the individual nationalities of each part of the UK' and highlight the role of the welfare state, party system and devolution as being central to this. They note that 'the Kirk, and separate legal and education systems have maintained Scottish distinctiveness' and that Scotland is fully integrated into the British party system whereas Northern Ireland is not. Essentially, they have been excluded due to British parties not competing in Northern Ireland's elections and also by the Northern Irish electorate being unwilling to vote for British parties. They argue that some unionists prefer it this way as 'separate party political institutions better served their ethnic interests' (ibid, p.144). Moreover, despite political representation at Westminster, politicians in Northern Ireland rarely engage with issues of British policy choosing instead to focus on matters relating only to Northern Ireland. Farrington & Walker (2009) conclude that the Union state may yet be flexible enough to contain secessionist tendencies and believe that Scotland (despite the election of an SNP minority government at the time) still favours the Union rather than independence. They also note that Unionists in Northern Ireland have been absent and also excluded from the debate which prompts the authors to argue that 'greater engagement may be necessary in order to make their case better appreciated and understood outside Northern Ireland'. Indeed, IGR between peripheries is seen as being crucial in developing unionists identity and the authors believe that there are signs that future IGR may become more cooperative between Northern Ireland and Scotland in order to facilitate such a change (ibid, p.148).

Aughey (1989, 2001) also consistently argues that the disintegration of the UK is not an inevitable consequence of rising sub-state nationalism within it. More recently, Aughey (2014) utilises the Scottish independence referendum as a possible signifier for change in Northern Ireland over the next two decades alongside other potentially seismic political events such as an exit from the EU. He highlights the current discourse amongst nationalists in Scotland, Wales and Ireland that a terminal decline in Britishness has been replaced by popular nationalism which will ultimately lead to the break-up of Britain (Aughey, 2014, p.818). He notes that Scottish independence is integral to this nationalist narrative and any rise in English nationalism which may result from the referendum would be seen as being a potential accelerant for disintegration. However, Aughey (2014) also argues that unionists are inherently sceptical of this nationalist narrative and believe that future constitutional change will be modest and limited due to a number of constraining factors. Indeed, the continuing ability of the UK state to accommodate the national identities of its constituent parts and more importantly, the will of its people to endorse devolution rather than independence lead unionists to believe that the 'prospect of the break-up of Britain is exaggerated' (Aughey, 2014, p.817).

Similarly, Aughey (2014) argues that unionists display equal scepticism to the prospect of Irish unity following constitutional change. He highlights the fact that since 2007 support for Irish unity has been declining in spite of electoral gains by Sinn Féin and that whilst the demographic gap between Protestants and Catholics may indeed be narrowing, only 25% of respondents identified as 'Irish-only' in the 2011 census as opposed to 40% who felt solely British. Aughey (2014) also questions the willingness of the people within the Republic of Ireland to embrace the idea of reunification particularly in the current economic climate. Utilising a Sunday Independent/ Millward Brown poll conducted in 2013 he finds that 60% of respondents were in favour of uniting Ireland in the long-term but only just over half of these would like to see Irish unity in the near future. Perhaps more telling is the number of Irish citizens who would be prepared to pay higher taxes for a united Ireland. Only 11% were in favour of this as opposed to a resounding 67% who said no. This leads Aughey (2014, p.821) to agree that unionists' scepticism over this issue is justified.

Wood, (2014, p.41) argues that 'if Scotland gains independence then it potentially marks a profound change for everyone living in Britain in terms of who 'we' are and our emotional attachments to particular peoples and places'. In terms of Scottish identity, she points to evidence that the Scots sense of Britishness would not diminish following independence. However, she finds this problematic given that the Scots would not be legally British. Wood (2014) points to Keating's (2014) explanation of what an independent Scotland would consist of in that it proposed the rejection of one Union, 'keeping the other five of currency, monarchy, society, Europe and defence. This is independence in a post-sovereignty era' (Keating,

2014). Post-independence Britain is not being discussed. She argues that Scottish independence may be a positive event allowing other parts of Britain to re-evaluate what it means to be British in the 21st century yet talks here about the current crisis of multiculturalism and therefore appears to be relating this point primarily to England and also Wales. However, this raises questions of identity in Northern Ireland where a majority of the population are attached to the Union in such a variety of ways (politically, culturally, economically and historically) and where the maintenance of the Union is their *raison d'être*. For unionists in Northern Ireland, Scottish independence would have had profound implications in terms of their identity and it will be interesting to assess the perceptions of unionist politicians to such matters.

Nationalism

According to Wood, (2014) there has been little consideration afforded to the issue of culture and identity in referendum debates due in part to the fact that the Yes campaign have deliberately engineered it thus. She suggests several cultural considerations which may illuminate the position of Northern Ireland's nationalists in relation to the referendum. The first of these concerns inclusiveness in the vision of an independent Scotland. Wood, (2014, p.40) states that 'the brand of Scottishness that is being promoted by the Scottish government is, and always has been, forward-thinking, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural, based on a Scottish nationalism that is strictly civic rather than ethnic in nature.' This, she argues is reflected in the fact that only Scottish inhabitants (regardless of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds) were able to vote in the referendum. Wood (2014) suggests that traditional Scottish culture (Gaelic speakers for example) may have felt marginalised by the referendum due to the lack of consideration for them on the ballot paper. This prompts Wood (2014) to question whether Yes Scotland's multi-cultural vision is at the expense of traditionalism and also to ask if other groups or cultures may have felt excluded from the referendum. Mycock (2012, p.54) however questions the 'wholly civic' nature of Scottish identity advanced by the SNP. He calls it a form of 'black sheep nationalism' which 'seeks to denigrate rival constructions of Scottish national identity whilst overlooking limitations in their own understanding of the Scottish nation and nationalism'. Mycock (2012, p.56) notes that most of the SNP's attack is aimed at Unionists who exhibit 'a strong sense of Scottishness' such as Gordon Brown as outlined above and argues that the shift of the party from ethnic-based nationalism in the 80s and 90s has not been absolute'.

The second point to consider surrounds the growing sense of cultural confidence amongst Scottish nationalists which, according to them will only be truly fulfilled in an independent Scotland (Wood, 2014, p.40). Here, she highlights the emergent feeling from within the Scottish arts community that independence will 'be the start of a huge renaissance in every aspect of Scottish culture' (Scottish novelist Alan Bissett (2013)

cited in Wood, 2014, p.41) and the 'sense that independence is necessary in order for the people of Scotland to be *fully* confident in their identity and culture' (ibid). Breaking free of London is seen as being a central factor in gaining this confidence and of being in control of their own destiny. Similarly, if independence is rejected, Wood (2014) argues that a corresponding slump in confidence (which is also under-researched) must also be considered. This debate is still very much embryonic in nature and affords little consideration to Northern Ireland. However, the question Wood (2014) raises over the inclusivity of the referendum process is interesting particularly when considering that the Scottish vision is based on civic rather than ethnic nationalism. Indeed, it will be interesting to explore how Irish nationalists in the province relate to this vision of an independent Scotland and how they feel they may fit into it in the future.

Cochrane (1994) emphasises Northern Ireland's position as 'a place apart' in relation to both Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. He argues that 'the orthodox unionist and nationalist views of the external political environment are seriously flawed to the point that both camps have become oblivious to the shifting political universe which surrounds them' (ibid, p.378). Furthermore, 'there has been a symmetrical withdrawal of commitment to Northern Ireland on the part of Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland' which neither unionists nor nationalists have appreciated fully (Cochrane, 1994, p.379). He argues that mainland support for unionists has been waning since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985 and much of this alienation lies in a lack of understanding of the unionist community in Northern Ireland. As unionists 'have built an ideology around an allegiance to Britain, it is impossible for them to concede that the British-namely the English, Scottish and Welsh- do not want them and perceive no cultural commonality to exist' (p.382). Unionist connections to Britishness are thus very outdated and lack genuine cultural connections.

Nationalists also face problems in their relationship with the Republic of Ireland which historically has viewed Northern Ireland as being peripheral to its own policy making priorities (Cochrane, 1994, p.389). A combination of factors such as a relatively young population and the longevity of partition have contributed towards a lack of empathy for claims of British oppression by Northern nationalists. Moreover, an increasingly liberal and Europeanised outlook in the Republic coupled with an embarrassment of the 'troubles' have led a majority to be uninterested in Irish unity at least in the short-term. Both unionists and nationalists therefore appear to face similar dilemmas in terms of identity which further isolates them from wider UK and Irish identity politics (Cochrane, 1994).

The considerable historical links which exist between the two countries stretch back to the 17th century and beyond. For instance, the well-documented Plantation of Ulster in 1609 is deemed by Cochrane (2013) to be the pivotal point in Irish history from which the current religious polarisation in Northern Ireland has arisen.

Described by Cochrane (2013, p.8) as an enormously ambitious project, the Plantation of Ulster saw an influx of some 170,000 English and Scottish Protestant settlers to Ulster in the space of a few years and stemmed from an attempt by the English to exert greater influence and control over a troublesome island. This policy of granting land to new Protestant settlers in exchange for loyalty to the Crown, created resentment and alienation amongst the Gaelic Catholic population and ultimately led to unrest and an uprising in the middle of the 17th century (Cochrane, 2013).

Walker (1995) describes how the Catholic uprising of 1641 prompted further significant arrivals of predominantly Scottish settlers in the latter part of the 17th century to help bolster the increasingly precarious Protestant position. Settling largely in the northern and eastern part of Ulster, Walker (1995, p.3) refers to this settlement as appearing 'in part as a Scottish 'colony''. Andrew Holmes (2009) appears to concur with this view and highlights in greater depth the religious aspect of the Scottish settlement in Ulster during the Plantation. He documents the arrival of Presbyterianism along with the Scottish immigrants and describes how the religion was sustained and consolidated both by support from Scotland and by further periods of Scottish immigration. Holmes (2009, p.615/17) notes that 'Presbyterians created a separate religious and political identity in the North East and used their sense of 'Scottishness' to formulate an Ulster-Scots identity'. Holmes (2009, p.617) like Walker (1995) argues that since its inception the identity has been used throughout history to bolster the unionist cause utilising a narrative which describes the Ulster-Scot as hard working, courageous and sober and highlights their exploits in relation to the Plantation, siege of Derry and the American Revolution (ibid, p.620). Further, according to Holmes (2009, p.619) 'Scottishness complemented and reinforced the British identity of Presbyterians in Ireland'.

Brian Graham (1998) argues that the Protestant community in Northern Ireland and particularly Ulster Unionists suffer from a confused identity by being essentially straddled between Irish nationalism on the one hand and allegiance to the British crown on the other. This link to Britain, whilst defining the Unionist allegiance, falls short of providing a Unionist identity as many Unionists believe that an Ulster identity must also reflect their position within the island of Ireland. Essentially, for Graham (1998) unionists seem pre-occupied with defining themselves against the 'other'. Graham (1998, p.139) goes further to argue that the resurrection of the Ulster-Scots culture and identity is an attempt by Unionists to evince a form of ethnic nationalism by laying legitimate claim to Ulster territory whilst acknowledging a shared past with Ireland. This cultural narrative, in asserting Ulster as a distinct territory also has negative connotations in terms of its links with Britain (and especially England) and moreover, espousing a separateness from England (as Scotland has recently) arguably plays into the hands of nationalists seeking independence from the UK.

Ian Adamson's (1982, 1991) theory on the origins of the early Irish inhabitants arguably forms the basis of the modern Ulster-Scots debate. Cochrane (2013), alludes to the fact that the sudden influx of Scottish settlers during the 17th century added to the numbers of generations already present within Ireland at the time and this is confirmed by Walker (1995) who offers reminders that population migration between the two countries had existed long before either formed a relatively modern identity and that in the pre-Roman era, Western Scotland formed part of the Ulster kingdom of Dalriada (Walker, 1995, p.4 and see also Graham, 1998). Building on A.T.Q Stewart's (1977) theory that *some* of the Planters of the 17th century were likely to be descendants of early Ulster invaders of Scotland, Adamson (1982, 1991) goes further to argue that the earliest settlers of Ireland were not the Celts or Gaels but the Cruthin, a people closely related to the Scottish Picts. If this theory is accurate then the Cruthin, (who Adamson believes sought refuge in Scotland from the Irish Gaels) upon returning to Ulster during the Plantation era, would be descendants of the original inhabitants of the island. As Walker (1995) points out, such information is of great significance to those in Ulster (particularly within the Protestant community) who seek to establish an identity in contrast with that of Irish nationalism yet which still retains a link to Britain (see also Graham, 1998).

The accuracy of Adamson's theory has been called into question amongst many academic quarters. Cathal McCall (2002) is a particularly vociferous critic. He highlights the fact that Ian Adamson is a member of the UUP and describes Adamson's theory as an 'invention' and a 'construction' with dubious anthropological credence based wholly on a myth which is yet to become established. By highlighting the contentious role of cultural myths in modern nation-building, McCall (2002) questions the historical accuracy of Adamson's theory and the dubious lineage of the Cruthin (see also Nic Craith, 2001). Indeed, he highlights the 'myth of siege' linked to the Ulster Unionist identity as being a much more solid and credible foundation with which to differentiate themselves from Irish nationalists (McCall, 2002, p.201). Essentially, McCall (2002) argues that the Ulster-Scots tradition, culture and language has been revived and reinvented in the 1990s in response to the political transformation in Northern Ireland. In essence, for McCall (2002) Ulster-Scots is an Ulster Unionist counter-response to the ascendancy of Irish nationalism.

Stapleton and Wilson (2004) point out that the Ulster-Scots identity has emerged not only from socio-political transformation, but also from unease and insecurity of increased devolution in the UK and changes in perceptions of 'Britishness'. However, they are also keen to establish that the Ulster-Scots identity has not been contrived and it is a 'real' and 'authentic' identity and culture in contemporary Northern Ireland (Stapleton & Wilson, 2004, p.564). One of the more interesting points they make alludes to the fact that the Ulster-Scots identity and use of language (Ullans) is by no means exclusive to the Protestant community. Indeed, according to the authors,

some of the first Scots to settle in Ulster were from the Highlands and were therefore mainly Catholic.

Language

There appears to be a general consensus amongst scholars that the Ulster-Scots language (or Ullans as it was re-named), emerged in the 1990s in response to the political transformation of Northern Ireland (Dowling, 2007; McCall, 2002; Nic Craith, 2001; Stapleton & Wilson, 2004). There is however, some disagreement over the prevalence of the language prior to this time. Dowling (2007) for instance argues that before the 1990s there was little widespread recognition of it (see also Nic Craith, 2001) whilst McCall (2002) and Walker (1995) are clear that Ulster-Scots is an established language which has undergone a revival. That said, most agree that its re-emergence was effectively a counter-response by unionists to the continued promotion of the Irish language, providing a timely boost for unionist identity during a period of cultural and political uncertainty (Crowley, 2006; McCall, 2002). The question of the status of Ulster-Scots as a language or a dialect lies at the heart of the debate although as Radford (2001) points out, it could be argued that this now matters little given that the GFA accorded Ulster-Scots equal status with the Irish language. Indeed, as Nic Craith (2001, p.23) highlights, the GFA states that all participants:

‘recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland’.

Moreover, the ratification of the European charter for Lesser-Used Languages in 1999 by the British government cemented both Irish and Ulster-Scots as languages (ibid).

There are many critics of the Ulster-Scots language, most notably amongst the nationalist community who see its equal status as a threat to future funding of the Irish language (Nic Craith, 2001). It has been disparaged as an example of ‘bad English’ and is seen by many as being ‘backward, premodern and rural’ and therefore completely at odds with a modern and industrialised region (McCall, 2002, p.203). Similarly, others argue that it is merely a dialect of Ulster English which has been promoted for political purposes. Indeed, Nic Craith (2001, p.22) highlights the fact that before the 1990s current promoters of Ulster-Scots (most notably Ian Adamson) described it as a version of the English language (see also Crowley, 2006). However, she disputes this, arguing that Ulster-Scots is a dialect of Scots rather than English although she stops short of identifying it as a language. The identification of Ulster-Scots as a dialect rather than a distinct language is seen as being problematic by McCall (2002, p.205) as he notes that ‘dialects...are still perceived generally to be an impediment to the social and economic progress of the

individual'. This, in his opinion, may inhibit its success in providing a foundation for Ulster-Scots culture and has led some to question whether Ulster-Scots language is necessary for a revival.

Dowling (2007) also finds that basing an identity on a language is problematic as languages tend to be geographically as well as culturally inclusive and as such he argues that Ulster-Scots is also likely to be spoken by some Catholics and nationalists (see also Stapleton & Wilson, 2004). He therefore questions the effectiveness of a unionist counter-identity founded on language. The earlier study by McCall (2002) reached roughly the same conclusion. By interviewing unionist politicians and activists shortly after the implementation of the GFA, McCall (2002) found that despite feeling that their culture was under threat, most unionists across the political spectrum were sceptical about the legitimacy of Ulster-Scots and therefore its ability to provide a successful foundation for a cultural reinvention. As there have been no similar studies conducted in the intervening years, the findings from this study will reveal how the language is currently viewed by elites across the political spectrum and therefore assess the current political significance of Ulster-Scots.

Religion, sectarianism and sport

The existence of sectarianism in Northern Ireland is widely acknowledged to be one of the main reasons why the social, economic and political progression of the province is being hampered. Many scholars agree that division in Northern Ireland is historical, structural and entrenched and is therefore difficult to break down. Brewer for instance (1992, p.358/9) defines sectarianism as 'the determination of actions, attitudes and practices by beliefs about religious difference, which results in their being invoked as the boundary marker to represent social stratification and conflict.'

Todd (2009) identifies three stages of division and related conflict in the history of Ireland/Northern Ireland. The first occurred during the 17th century plantation where two communities (Protestants and Catholics) became opposed and where religion became the dominant signifier in terms of difference' (McVeigh & Rolston, 2007, p.4). The second arose from partition whereby religious segregation became entrenched and intensified and 'defined the two communities in opposing national and state-centric terms' (Todd, 2009, p.343). As McVeigh & Rolston (2007, p.6) note: 'partition of the island in 1921 was the first sectarian act from which the other sectarian institutions, relations and practices flowed.' This places much emphasis on the formation of the state in defining sectarianism. The third phase began with the onset of the troubles. This division became political (constitutional) but was 'fuelled by religious ethos, economic conditions and perceived injustice' (Todd, 2009, p.344). She argues that each subsequent phase compounded the division and conflict which had gone before and concludes that 'partition created the conditions for lasting conflict in Northern Ireland...In effect it created a structural bind, in which nationalist

equality came to threaten unionist security' (ibid, p.341.) McVeigh & Rolston (2007, p.10) state that sectarianism persists in Northern Ireland following The Agreement (see also Geoghegan, 2008; Shirlow, 2001) and is even considered as being 'normality'. They state that:

'There is no area of social life in Northern Ireland which is not sectarianised, or structured in some way by sectarianism. It continues to profoundly structure where people are born, where they go to school, where they live, where they work, where they socialise, what sports teams they support and where they are buried.' (McVeigh & Rolston, 2007, p.16).

The existence of sectarianism in Scotland is rather less well known and has spawned a contentious debate amongst scholars. Much evidence is put forward for its' existence by the Scottish historian Tim Devine (2000) see also Walls & Williams, 2005) which is counterbalanced by the views of Bruce, (2000), Bruce, Glendinning, Paterson & Rosie, (2004) and Rosie (2004) who find little evidence for the phenomena and dismiss it as nothing more than a social myth. As there appears to be very little grey-area in this debate it is worth noting Walker's (2012) take on the issue. Essentially, those who argue for its existence see sectarianism as being deep-rooted and based on Anti-Catholicism whilst those against (Bruce most notably) believe its existence is largely insignificant and manifests only in social situations such as football matches (Walker, 2012, p.375).

Bruce et al (2004, p.124) identify three signifiers of sectarianism in Scotland; the Ulster conflict, football rivalry and street violence. Indeed, Bruce (2000, p.141) feels that the current extent of sectarianism in Scotland amounts to 'slumming at the weekend' which may involve attending Old Firm games 'and shouting sectarian abuse at the Celtic players'. He argues that the Old Firm rivalry between Glasgow Rangers and Glasgow Celtic amounts to just that and is left at the stadium gates. Moreover, Bruce et al (2004, p.132) state that: 'Football rivalry is a social force in its own right that should not, without considerable scaling down, be taken to stand for anything else'.

Many scholars disagree with Bruce's (2000, 2004) views. MacMillan (2000, p.18/19) for instance who reignited the debate on Scottish sectarianism in 1999, argues that religion and football (particularly in terms of the Old Firm) are inextricably linked and inevitably result in sectarianism. Being of Catholic faith, he cites several instances whereby events in Northern Ireland (such as the murder of loyalist prisoner Billy Wright) appeared to generate sympathy amongst certain Rangers players and officials. Styles, (2000 p.118) is equally convinced of the presence of sectarianism within Scottish football. He describes 'the rivalry between Celtic and Rangers as being in large part, an expression of the tensions between Catholic and Protestant'. Moreover, according to Styles (2000) such public rivalries enable sectarianism to persist in Scotland.

The study by Bairner & Shirlow (1998, p.168) raises an interesting point which links sport (particularly football) with the issue of ethno-identity in Northern Ireland. They note that 'the general relationship between politics and sport in Northern Ireland is already well established' and that 'the organisation of sport in the province not only reflects but can also exacerbate sectarian attitudes and the politics of division...' By examining the identity of fans in relation to Linfield Football Club and its stadium Windsor Park they reveal that both the team and the stadium are linked to Protestantism. Thus, the existence of the Northern Ireland national soccer team is of great importance to unionists (particularly men) and 'a unionist atmosphere surrounds the game at its highest levels' (ibid, p.169). Catholics are therefore largely unwelcome in such sporting arenas and make conscious decisions to stay away. They describe this 'hegemonic control over soccer' as an extension of the 'siege mentality' which simultaneously expresses 'cultural resistance to the nationalist 'other' whilst celebrating their own unionist/loyalist identity (Bairner & Shirlow, 1998, p.169/174). Stadia such as Windsor Park therefore become 'political metaphors for the political territory which is regarded as being in need of defence' (ibid). The assertion of the authors that this approach may also apply to other areas experiencing 'ethno-sectarian conflict' outside Northern Ireland suggests that a similar unionist approach to supporting Glasgow Rangers may exist and this needs to be tested against the data.

Conclusion

A review of relevant literature demonstrates that there are a number of potentially meaningful formal and informal connections between Northern Ireland and Scotland. These cover high politics, with East-West policy and institutional connections, as well as party interaction. However, they also relate to historical and cultural ties that could be significant personally as well as politically influential.

This literature review examined specific areas of scholarly research to discover the potential political and cultural connections which may exist between Scotland and Northern Ireland following the recent Scottish independence referendum. It has consistently shown that the post-devolution literature has a predominantly British focus which significantly marginalises Northern Ireland from contemporary debates. As such, the review revealed that there is a distinct dearth of significant literature which examines Northern Ireland's position in relation to the Scottish independence referendum or which considers the current political or cultural relationship which exists between Scotland and Northern Ireland. Indeed, there is almost a complete absence of empirical evidence which examines the perceptions of Northern Irish elites to such issues. Therefore, section one of the analysis aims to discover how Northern Ireland's unionist, nationalist and non-aligned elites interact with political developments in Scotland.

There appears to be some contention amongst scholars in the ability of the institutions of the UK devolution system to foster and develop cooperation, agreement and innovation amongst devolved nations and particularly between Scotland and Northern Ireland (see Swenden & McEwen, 2014 for example). In contrast, Birrell, (2012) arguably the foremost expert in post-devolution Northern Ireland politics consistently argues that institutional fora such as the BIC are significant to Northern Ireland politics in terms of IGR and the use of such institutions also facilitates policy transfer between the two countries. However, despite these claims, Birrell (2012) finds little evidence of such transfer between them. To date, there is a lack of detailed literature which specifically examines the post-devolution political relationship between Scotland and Northern Ireland and certainly there are none which consider the views of the region's politicians in relation to such debates. Section two will therefore fill this gap in scholarship by assessing the views of Northern Ireland's politicians on the significance of formal party, institutional and policy linkage between Scotland and Northern Ireland.

A significant overlap exists in the literature with regard to the historical, cultural and religious links which connect Scotland and Northern Ireland and these specific areas will form the basis of investigations in section three. Much of the focus of this literature relates to unionism with the Ulster-Scots identity appearing to be central to this. However, it has also been suggested that nationalist identity is also not without problem (Graham, 1998) and requires further investigation. Indeed, Wood (2014) claims that there has been little consideration afforded to the issue of culture and identity in recent referendum debates and of the little that has been said most relates to Scotland and not Northern Ireland.

Whilst much of the established research provides insight into the ways in which Northern Ireland and Scotland could be connected to each other, a rigorous review of the impact of these links in the contemporary era is an obvious gap in the literature. Within the constraints of a project of this size a particular aspect of that gap emerges as a feasible and useful area of analysis, namely the issue of significance. As the introduction showed, both popular and academic debate around the independence referendum focused very narrowly on Scotland and England and so exploring the reaction of Northern Ireland's politicians is a useful starting point for investigation. However, beyond that there is the issue of how much the possible points of similarity and connection that have been identified in this review have significance and meaning for those in a position to make something of these links. A critical evaluation of relative significance and meaning in relation to these formal and informal ties would therefore contribute something contemporary and original to this topic. In light of this the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What do reactions to the referendum highlight about how unionist, nationalist and non-aligned political perspectives interact with political developments in Scotland?

2. How significant are formal party, institutional and policy links between Scotland and Northern Ireland for Northern Ireland's politicians?
3. How significant are cultural links and connections between Scotland and Northern Ireland for Northern Ireland's politicians?

The following chapter will discuss the methods employed to provide answers to these questions.

Chapter Three: Methodology

As an original contribution to post-devolution knowledge, the study employs a qualitative strategy of enquiry utilising primary research data collected from in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with senior political elites representing all major parties within Northern Ireland (see page v for list). This form of purposive sampling ensured that all subjects included in the study would have a firm and current grasp of the subject matter (see Robinson, 2014, p.32). Moreover, by ensuring cross-party representation of unionists, nationalists and the non-aligned in the sample, the study incorporates a broad range of the perceptions of Northern Irish politicians towards Scotland. The willingness of multiple party leaders and other senior elites to participate in the study reflects the salience and relevance of the research subject and the fact that to date, it is an area of the devolution and constitutional debate which has been considerably under-researched. As a result there were no problems encountered in gaining access to participants or securing the availability of elites for interview.

There is a growing body of literature which seeks to examine the issue of researcher identity and how this relates to conducting successful research in sensitive locations such as Northern Ireland (Reed, 2012). McEvoy (2006) for example argues that interviewing political elites in Northern Ireland can be problematic in that participants may make assumptions regarding the identity of a researcher and therefore tailor their responses accordingly. Also, politicians 'may be reluctant to stray from the party line due to the zero-sum nature of Northern Ireland politics' and researchers may need to probe in order to extrapolate further detail (McEvoy, 2006, p.184). Whilst these problems appear to be more salient for researchers originating from Northern Ireland, they also apply to 'outsiders'. Hermann (2001) for instance highlights the fact that all researchers (particularly those with an Irish or British cultural heritage) should be mindful of bringing pre-conceived bias into the interview.

Reed (2012) found that as an English researcher, a considerable amount of background research on Northern Ireland was needed to become acquainted with its complexities and he argues that such knowledge is a prerequisite for building relationships with participants. Therefore, in order to minimise bias in this study an initial extensive review of the academic literature was undertaken in order to establish the relevant theoretical perspectives and to become familiar with both the historical and current situation in Northern Ireland. Preparation of the interview schedule was then thorough and rigorous and careful to avoid antagonistic phrasing or controversial lines of questioning. Being an English researcher and therefore classed as an 'outsider', all interviews were conducted from as neutral a perspective as possible, a technique which Reed (2012) believes may elicit more broad and personal responses and which may in turn produce a more objective analysis. Indeed, it was found that as Scotland was the predominant focus of the research many participants provided more generous personal responses to questions when

they were not directly related to party politics in Northern Ireland. However, despite the best efforts of employing a neutral approach and by adhering to a strictly neutral line of questioning, interviewees inevitably strayed towards an adversarial commentary which followed party lines. However, such expressions were largely made tangentially and to a certain extent were mostly irrelevant to the research subject and therefore did not significantly affect the final analysis.

The originality of the research and therefore the largely exploratory methodological strategy utilised translates into a predominantly constructivist epistemological approach. The use of semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection reflects the fact that according to Guba & Lincoln, (1994, p.111) within the constructivist paradigm 'individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction *between and among* investigator and respondents'. Moreover, the exploratory nature of the study, the relative inexperience of the researcher and the complexity of both the participants involved and the research subject are accommodated within this constructivist approach as it is essentially pragmatic in nature and aims to promote a greater understanding of the research subject by participants and researcher alike (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thematic analysis was utilised to aid flexibility in the interpretation of data whilst simultaneously accommodating the relative inexperience of the researcher to the process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As outlined above, a thorough review of the relevant literature was conducted prior to data collection and the research questions were subsequently formulated from this review. Therefore, the data analysis was theoretical and not inductive in nature (ibid) and coding was carried out by paying specific attention to the relevant research questions.

It is acknowledged that there are limitations within the chosen methodology. A case study approach would have provided greater scope to examine the views of respondents from multiple perspectives by triangulating primary data with secondary documentary sources. However, such a technique is also not without its critics (see for instance Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gerring, 2004; Nissen, 1998). Moreover, the constraints of time and resources which regularly beset Master's projects were particularly pertinent in the completion of this study thus limiting the chosen methodological approach. That said, as a study which seeks to discover the extent of Scotland's influence on Northern Ireland politics, an analysis of primary interview data garnered from senior Northern Irish political elites is sufficient and appropriate to be able to answer the research questions and make an original contribution to post-devolution knowledge in the UK.

All ethical considerations were addressed throughout all stages of the study particularly with regard to interview procedures and protocol. An initial submission to the School Research and Ethics Panel (SREP) established the ethical parameters of the research and these were adhered to throughout the completion of the study. All participants were supplied with an outline of the research brief and therefore gave

informed consent to take part in the study. Elites were also made aware that they could withdraw from the research at any time at no detriment to themselves. Additionally, as some interviews were conducted over the telephone, these participants were informed that the interview would be recorded and they gave their additional verbal consent to this. Finally, all data collected was handled following the necessary data protection protocol with hard copies of data being held in locked, secure storage and computerised material protected on password-encrypted computers.

Chapter Four: Analysis

Section One

The interaction of Northern Ireland's politicians with the Scottish independence referendum

Introduction

The Scottish independence referendum had significant implications for Northern Ireland due to its potential to stimulate nationalism within all constituent parts of the UK. As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, Northern Ireland became marginalised in relation to the referendum and it has been argued by Bradbury (2015) and Keating (2014) that the main reason for this stemmed from the fact that political parties in Northern Ireland were excluded from both sides of the referendum campaign in Scotland. As a result of such exclusion Bradbury (2015) further argues that the impact of the referendum on the region was minimal. By examining the reactions of cross-party elites to the referendum, the following section aims to discover how politicians in Northern Ireland approached the campaign and how they responded to the result thus determining the extent of their political interaction with the referendum in general. The section argues that all of the major political parties represented in this study were largely uninvolved with the referendum campaign due either to self-exclusion or exclusion by both sides of the Scottish referendum campaigns. Moreover, the political impact of the referendum on Northern Ireland was indeed minimal with all major parties (with the exception of the SDLP) reporting little or no change in party outlook or strategy.

To provide context for the subsequent discussion, the section begins by outlining the respective political stances of the main political parties towards the issue of Scottish independence.

Political stances towards the referendum

Before embarking on any specific analyses of the reactions of Northern Irish politicians to the referendum, it is first helpful to document their respective political stances towards it. Here, as one might expect given their *raison d'être*, the primary data shows a clear divide between the views of unionist and nationalist politicians. Unsurprisingly, all unionists (Wells; Barr; Sugden; Allister and McNarry) were opposed to Scottish independence, wishing the Union to remain intact. Health Minister Jim Wells of the right-wing DUP summarised the unionist position: *'You know we're entirely a pro-UK, pro-Union party...the party to a man or a woman would have wanted Scotland to stay. We are much stronger as the four countries of the UK..'*

By contrast, both nationalist respondents were equally clear that they welcomed the prospect of Scottish independence. Veteran MLA John Dallat of centre-left SDLP

commented: *'...we were totally supportive of the referendum and we er, wished it every success and just sorry it wasn't successful...'* Caitriona Ruane, Chief Whip for left-wing Sinn Féin concurred and stated: *'...obviously the vast majority of our party and our support base would have loved to see Scottish independence.'* Neither respondent made any direct link between the prospect of Scottish independence and its possibilities for a united Ireland rather their focus was on seeing the Scots *'achieve their full potential'* (Ruane, 2015). Such comments appear to resonate with Wood's (2014) suggestion in that for Northern Irish nationalists at least; independence is seen as being necessary to gain full cultural confidence.

Respondents from the non-aligned parties were then split on the issue of Scottish independence. Professor John Barry, former leader of the left-wing GPNI made it clear that he was a supporter. For Barry the largely civic nationalist approach of the SNP and the fact that the Scottish Greens had worked alongside them in advancing *'a left-wing progressive alternative to austerity'* was a major factor in Barry's support for Scottish independence. He added: *'...for all those reasons not least then of course about getting rid of Faslane and Trident and so on which all Green parties on these islands will be supportive of erm, I was supportive of a 'yes' vote.'*

However, leader of the APNI David Ford, a centrist and devolutionist described the Scots' decision to hold the referendum as *'a fairly negative way to be proceeding'* and was clear that his party supports further *'significant devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland'*. For Ford and the Alliance Party, devolution is seen as being the platform around which *'further progress'* can be made in terms of the long-term future of the Union.

Party political approaches to the referendum campaign

Despite the high constitutional stakes of the referendum for unionist and non-aligned politicians and the clear opportunity it presented for nationalists, all political parties in Northern Ireland were largely uninvolved in the referendum campaign. Both Wells and Stephen Barr of the UUP were keen to be seen to be exerting minimal interference in the campaign and cited unwelcome meddling in their own affairs as justification for such an approach. Wells declared: *'Well, what the Scottish do is entirely their affair. We wouldn't want the Scots to interfere in any referendum in Northern Ireland and vice-versa.'* Such opinion was not only confined to unionists. Both Barry and Ruane reported that the GPNI and Sinn Féin respected *'the right of the Scottish people to make their decisions...'* Moreover, the *'very careful'* approach of Sinn Féin to the referendum appears to support Bell's (2014) suggestion that the party were reluctant to actively engage with the 'yes' campaign due to their negative and 'divisive associations'. This is further supported by leader of UKIPNI David McNarry who, in making reference to the wider issue of sectarianism and how interference from politicians in Northern Ireland could have been construed in Scotland, indicates that unionists also had to be *'very careful'* in their approach and

were similarly aware that their particular brand of politics may have been unhelpful to their Scottish counterparts in the 'no' campaign.

Therefore, politicians from across the political spectrum and not just Sinn Féin as indicated by Bell, (2014) appeared to be mindful that their particular type of ethno-centric politics may not have been helpful to the causes of their Scottish counterparts. As such, the DUP, UUP, GPNI and Sinn Féin respected the right of the Scots to determine their own future and were reluctant to become overtly involved. Indeed, the minimal interference of the DUP and nationalist parties in the referendum campaign is confirmed by Wells who remarked:

'Obviously some people were invited over to campaign and sometimes the Orange Order came over for rallies and you know, we took part in some debates but we watched and waited...the nationalists also kept out of it. They could see the dangers of becoming directly involved.'

Both Dallat and Ford revealed that the SDLP and the APNI had approached their Scottish campaign counterparts with offers of assistance and were rebuffed. This supports the views of Bradbury (2015) and Keating (2014) that both sides of the referendum campaign in Scotland were keen to exclude Northern Irish parties from becoming involved. The reluctance of the SNP to engage with Irish nationalists as suggested by Bradbury (2015) is supported by Dallat who disclosed that the SDLP were given short shrift by the SNP in talks held before the referendum. He declared:

'We had some discussions with the SNP before the referendum. They were keen that we wouldn't overtly be seen to be er, identifying with it because they weren't at that stage and we you know, listened carefully and took their advice.'

Similarly, Ford's comments reveal that it was not only unionists who were unwelcome in the Better Together campaign as also suggested by Bradbury (2015). The offer of help from the Alliance Party to the Scottish Liberal Democrats *'even in the context of having slightly more sensible, liberal views from Northern Ireland'* was rebuffed as *'they just really wanted to run things on a Scottish basis only'*. As a result, Ford stated *'that we respected them and left them to it'* which is a similar reaction to that exhibited by mainstream unionists, the GPNI and Sinn Féin. It is telling that Ford alludes to a certain amount of involvement from Wales in the campaign, yet the APNI were excluded. This further supports the views of Bradbury (2015) and Keating (2014) that both sides of the Scottish referendum campaign wished to disassociate themselves from Northern Ireland's sectarian politics. Indeed, Barry stated that in the context of the referendum, the link between Northern Ireland and Scotland would mean little to the Scottish electorate and he believes that *'for most people it's not on the agenda and if it is, Northern Ireland is associated with bad stuff- killings, bombings, sectarian killings and all the rest of it'*. Independent Unionist Claire Sugden agreed that Northern Ireland was given little consideration

during the referendum campaign and that the province is often '*forgotten about*' because of its history. As such she feels that Northern Ireland is largely irrelevant in terms of current Scottish nationalism, a view which resonates with that of Keating, (2014).

The impact of the referendum on Northern Ireland politics

It has been argued by Bradbury (2015) that the referendum result had little impact on Northern Ireland as parties had largely been excluded from the referendum campaign and debate. For those respondents who were opposed to independence and particularly unionists this appears to be very much the case. McNarry commented: '*It has really, it's been strange in Northern Ireland really. Politically, it (the referendum) has had no direct or specific bearing on unionists.*' Of all unionist participants this is particularly evident in Wells' responses. Like the majority of unionists, he was clearly relieved that the Scots had ultimately rejected independence yet described the impact of the referendum on Northern Ireland as being '*very limited*' and was clear that the DUP had other priorities once the result was delivered. Wells stated:

'So erm, relief and it moved on and after September 18th we didn't give it too much thought. Had it gone the other way oh gosh, it would have been a huge issue for us... but once the decision was banked and pocketed we just moved on with so many crises that we're dealing with.'

Clearly this is a reference to the impasse over welfare reform and the failure of the Haass initiative which threatened to destabilise if not suspend the Northern Ireland government. However, Wells is clear that the DUP gave little further thought to the referendum after the result or the ensuing rise in Scottish nationalism which resulted from it. Other participants were more concerned with the post-referendum future of the Union. Stephen Barr, senior policy advisor to the UUP recognised the fact that '*there are changes afoot*' within the UK devolution settlement and that the UUP were prepared to '*play their part*' in any necessary reforms. Barr observed that England is '*getting frustrated which isn't good and the Scots seem to have an appetite for something more*'. Indeed, the English question appeared to be at the forefront of most unionist (and Alliance) minds in the immediate aftermath of the referendum. Both McNarry and Ford reiterated calls for a Constitutional Convention. Ford felt this was needed in light of David Cameron's lacklustre response to the referendum which he deemed to be '*distinctly unhelpful*'. As a proponent of federalism, Ford described the lack of representation of England within the current devolution arrangements as '*a real problem*' and that whilst the '*retreat into English nationalism*' by the Conservative Party had helped them to '*fend off UKIP, it hasn't actually done anything to look to the long-term needs of the UK.*'

Fringe unionists Allister and McNarry also commented on the possibility that England may tire of providing financial support to the Celtic periphery which supports the view

of Cartrite, (2012). McNarry remarked that the referendum had *'made the English population wake up'* with regards to the Barnett Formula *'and particularly about how well Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland do compared to some of the regions in England, particularly in the North of England...'* Such developments would be particularly problematic for Northern Ireland which currently relies heavily on financial assistance provided by the Barnett Formula.

The majority of respondents who were opposed to independence agree with Jeffery (2015) that any future threat to the Union will likely originate in either England or Scotland. In the short-term they seem to be largely preoccupied with the English question rather than the possibilities of a second Scottish independence referendum. However, contrary to the views of Bell, (2014) and Cartrite, (2012) several participants appear to suggest that Irish nationalism in the province has also been stimulated by the referendum. Only respondents from the right of the political spectrum commented on the significance of this. Leader of TUV Jim Allister for instance remarked that the relative closeness of the referendum result had *'reignited for them (Irish nationalists) their aspiration and perhaps given them a bit of a fillip'*. He went on to declare that the referendum had fed *'the romanticism of Irish nationalism in that regard and to that extent has been destabilising here.'*

Furthermore, Barry observed that both Sinn Féin and to a lesser extent, the SDLP were *'all in favour'* of Scottish independence and *'were making common cause with the SNP'* due to the similarities in their respective political projects. Ruane for instance stated that there was *'a huge dynamic'* surrounding the referendum and found the renewed debate *'around whether you call it a United Kingdom or a disunited Kingdom as really interesting'*. That said, she also stated that there was little prospect of a united Ireland in terms of demographics at the time of the referendum and that *'what needs to happen is, there needs to be an unstoppable momentum towards change in this part of Ireland.'* Ruane elaborated that part of this change would involve significant electoral gains by Sinn Féin and declared that *'Sinn Féin is growing North and South and would do very well in the elections next year.'* However, according to Aughey (2014) support for Irish unity is declining despite electoral gains by Sinn Féin. Ultimately, the approach of Sinn Féin to the referendum could be described as being largely opportunistic as suggested by Bradbury (2015) and Irish unity remains the long-term goal of the party. Indeed, following the referendum result Wells observed that *'Sinn Féin have pulled their horns in because I think they saw this as a good opportunity which just hasn't come.'* Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness did issue a call for a border poll following the referendum result (Belfast Telegraph, 2014), but given the many political crises occurring within the region at the time and the pressing issue of corporation tax, such a call appeared to be given little credence by unionists politicians.

In terms of post-referendum party strategy, the majority of respondents reported little or no change. Again, Wells was particularly forthright on this issue declaring that the

DUP had not *'changed our stance one iota'*. He felt that as *'a 100% Unionist, pro-Union, pro-British party'* the position of the DUP need not be compromised. He does concede that if the Scots had voted to secede from the Union, the DUP *'might have changed fundamentally how we'd be dealing with things'* but gives no detail as to what that would have entailed. Ultimately, Wells felt that the position of the DUP was *'stronger and enhanced as a result of the Scottish people's decision'* and appeared to be satisfied that in the short-term at least, the future of the Union seems assured. Such opinion is echoed by several participants who were opposed to independence. Barr for instance confirms the pro-Union position of the UUP which he feels has been reaffirmed by the rejection of independence. He stated: *'No erm, if anything it er... we've always been firm believers in the Union. We see the Union in economic, political, social, cultural terms that it makes sense for us on all those levels.'* Similarly, for Ford, a devolutionist and supporter of the 'no' campaign, the result arguably presented the best case scenario for the Alliance Party and as such reported no change in party strategy.

Despite the clear opportunity that the referendum presented for Sinn Féin, Ruane reported a similar inflexibility in party strategy to that advanced by Wells of the DUP. She confirmed that uniting Ireland is a long-term strategy for the party yet when asked what Sinn Féin's response would have been had Scotland voted 'yes' she replied:

'Well we'd probably have done the exact same as we're doing now. I mean we've our political project; the Scots have their political project erm, we're clear we want a united Ireland and that's where we're going. So we'll continue with our project of a united Ireland.' (Ruane, 2015)

Unlike Ford, Barry felt that the immediate threat to the Union still resided in Scotland. He stated that the issue of Scottish independence *'hasn't gone away'* and has only been delayed and that the focus of the SNP, the Greens and others in the 'yes' campaign are still set on Scottish secession. Both Barry and Ruane remarked upon the increasingly negative aspect of campaigning employed by the Better Together campaign as polling day approached. Barry for instance described the threat of many financial institutions and the wider business community to withdraw from an independent Scotland as *'disgraceful'*. Ruane placed much emphasis upon the lessons that could be drawn from such strategies and specifically those relating to 'project fear'. She stated that Sinn Féin could *'learn from the tactics used by the English establishment against the referendum particularly in the last number of days'* and the *'bogus arguments'* they advanced. Thus the 'demonstration effect' of the referendum (Cartrite, 2012, p.514/515) for the GPNL and Sinn Féin lays in the approach employed by those opposing independence and such information will undoubtedly inform their own future campaigns either in terms of a second independence referendum or a referendum for a united Ireland.

By far the most dynamic response to the referendum was provided by Dallat of the SDLP. He described it as *'a watershed in politics'* and felt particularly that the rise in Scottish nationalism evident both in the referendum and the imminent General Election would *'have huge ripple effects for er, politics on these islands in the future.'* Dallat is clear that the referendum *'has fundamentally changed the politics on this island'* and that the SDLP is *'actively planning'* new relationships with both the SNP and Plaid Cymru alongside their more traditional alliances with parties in the Republic of Ireland and Britain. This change in strategy appears to stem from the fact that the SDLP are currently languishing well behind Sinn Féin in terms of electoral popularity as highlighted by Hepburn & McLoughlin, (2011). Indeed, Dallat appears bitter that there has been little *'real political progress'* of the more progressive and inclusive vision of civic nationalism advanced by the SDLP as opposed to Sinn Féin *'who have got a very narrow agenda for nationalism and unity'*. Dallat describes the possibilities of new alliances between the SDLP, SNP and Plaid Cymru as *'exciting'* however; as nationalism in Northern Ireland is currently dominated by Sinn Féin such an alliance is unlikely to happen. Nevertheless, Dallat warns unionists and others in Northern Ireland who may be *'in denial'* of the effects of the referendum that the resulting rise in Scottish nationalism, particularly in regards to the General Election will, in time show *'that the referendum did affect us.'*

Overall, the interviews suggest that the impact of the Scottish independence referendum on Northern Ireland politics has been minimal with the majority of party strategies remaining unchanged. This is particularly evident amongst unionists and the Alliance Party who clearly feel reassured by the outcome. For the DUP the post-referendum priority was to solve the numerous crises that the province was undergoing, the most significant being the impasse over welfare reform as highlighted by Trench, (2014). Sinn Féin remain committed to their long-term strategy of a united Ireland and despite the clear opportunity that the referendum presented, like the DUP, exhibited a similar inflexibility in party strategy towards it. With little change in other aspects of party outlook the dichotomous relationship that exists between the two largest parties is therefore unlikely to change following the referendum. However, it has been revealed throughout this section that contrary to the views of Bell (2014) and Cartrite (2012) the referendum has stimulated Irish nationalism particularly within the SDLP who share a more inclusive form of civic nationalism with the SNP. However, as assistance from the SDLP was rebuffed by the SNP during the referendum campaign, this raises questions as to the likelihood of such political alliances and relationships becoming more salient following the referendum particularly in light of the divergence which exists in regard to social issues in both countries. Nevertheless, the post-referendum political relationship between Scotland and Northern Ireland may prove to be significant particularly in terms of nationalism and this will be examined in the following section.

Section Two

The significance of the institutional links between Northern Ireland and Scotland

Introduction

The previous section reveals that the Scottish independence referendum has exerted a subtle dynamic on Northern Ireland politics. Whilst its overall impact has been limited for unionists and the APNI given that the constitutional status quo of the UK has been maintained, there is also substantial evidence to suggest that the referendum has provided a stimulus for Irish nationalism in Northern Ireland. This is particularly significant given the continuing rise of Scottish nationalism and the likelihood of a second independence referendum as highlighted by Cairney (2015) and Jeffery (2015). However, simultaneously, the referendum has also revealed that Northern Ireland continues to be peripheral to Scottish politics. In the post-referendum era the future political relationship between Northern Ireland and Scotland is likely to become increasingly significant for Northern Irish elites and particularly for unionists and nationalists. That said, the review of the literature appears to suggest that the current institutional links between Northern Ireland and Scotland are not sufficiently developed to facilitate such relations.

The following section examines the views of politicians on matters such as IGR, political linkage and policy transfer to determine how significant the institutional links between both countries are. It argues that IGR between both countries particularly in terms of the BIC is largely symbolic for both unionists and nationalists and is therefore unlikely to foster any substantial improvement in cooperation or policy transfer between the two nations. Party political incongruence also remains very much in evidence and despite attempts by Sinn Féin and the SDLP to nurture relationships and alliances with the SNP and Plaid Cymru, it is argued that the reluctance of the SNP to engage with Northern Ireland's sectarian politics as evidenced in the previous section will mean that such relations are unlikely to happen.

Inter-governmental relations between Northern Ireland and Scotland

Devolved Inter-governmental relations

Overall, all respondents that provided comment on the subject of IGR were either current or former ministers of government and would therefore have had first-hand experience of such relations with Scotland. In terms of devolved IGR the majority of comment was provided by representatives of the DUP and Sinn Féin, who, as the two largest parties, suppliers of the First and Deputy First Ministers and the larger number of ministers, would be more likely to participate in IGR with Scotland as opposed to some of the other parties represented in this study. Both the DUP and Sinn Féin appear to enjoy regular contact with their Scottish counterparts and their

respective relationships with the majority SNP government are amicable. Minister for Health Jim Wells remarked that there are regular inter-ministerial meetings between Scotland and Northern Ireland particularly in times of crisis and commented: *'I would meet with my colleagues in Scotland constantly about important issues- Ebola being the most recent one.'* Moreover, he declares that there is a level of continuing cooperation between the two nations on economic matters, stating: *'I suppose to an extent we all gang up on Westminster to demand more money and more attention and I think that will continue.'* Wells was also keen to stress that the relationship between the DUP and the SNP was on a friendly footing despite the obvious clash in political ideology between the two parties. He stated:

'The relationship's excellent at the minute. There's no acrimony between Alex Salmond and Sturgeon or anybody against us. It's a very amicable relationship even though they are nationalists because they are nationalists without a military wing. They're not going to bomb or shoot people into an independent Scotland; they're going to do it through democratic means. So therefore, Alex Salmond would be over here regularly to meet the First Minister with no problems there at all. A good relationship.'

Wells' comments appear to resonate with Fanning's (2005) suggestion that there is a certain amount of political tension between the DUP and the SNP which may have increased if Scotland had gained independence. Indeed, had Scotland voted 'yes' Wells stated that the relationship *'would have changed dramatically. It would have been completely different.'* He did not elaborate but clearly, IGR between the DUP and the SNP is finely balanced. This view is further supported by remarks made by Wells regarding the potential outcome of the General Election 2015 where a Labour-SNP coalition was promoted in the media as being a distinct possibility. He stated: *'We will not support the SNP. The SNP are fundamentally an anti-Unionist party...'* Such opinion was also held by Allister who remarked upon the *'considerable dismay amongst many Unionists in Northern Ireland at the thought of Miliband being in government at the end of a string operated by the Scottish nationalists.'*

These comments suggest that the relationship between unionists and more importantly the DUP and the SNP were tenuous in the aftermath of the referendum. Moreover, they appear to contradict Birrell's (2012) assertion that political parties in Northern Ireland have traditionally been unconcerned with the political composition of Westminster government. This suggests that political incongruence may well become an increasingly significant factor in IGR between the two nations in the future as suggested by Swenden & McEwen, (2014).

Ruane (2015) was clear that as far as Sinn Féin was concerned they were *'in a new era of Irish-British relations.'* She, like Wells evinced a close relationship with Scotland, the SNP and to a lesser extent Wales and highlighted the fact that Sinn Féin had participated in regular cross-party contact in Scotland. Crucially, for Sinn

Féin, the prospect of Scottish independence appears to have resulted in much contact as Ruane declared that *'our people were over as observers for the Scottish referendum, we've been over since, we will be over so we'd have...you know, be talking to all parties in Scotland..'* That said, she also highlighted regular, ongoing contact with Scotland *'on all sorts of issues'* as well as frequent meetings between Martin McGuinness, Nicola Sturgeon and Alex Salmond and other Sinn Féin colleagues.

The similar anti-austerity approaches of the SNP and Sinn Féin would indicate the presence of some common ground between the two parties. As Ruane pointed out *'the Scots are anti-austerity, we're anti-austerity...'* However, Ruane (2015) is clear that their approach to IGR is very much cross-party in nature and does not rest solely on a relationship with the SNP. The important point to glean from Ruane's comments is that Sinn Féin, a Republican party with no links to any British political party (Birrell, 2012) is actively and somewhat enthusiastically engaging in IGR with Scotland (and Wales) following the Scottish independence referendum. With unionists becoming increasingly marginalised from Scottish politics, this is likely to exacerbate tensions between the DUP and Sinn Féin and will almost certainly impact on any future IGR between Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Thus it appears that both the DUP and Sinn Féin are in regular contact with representatives of the Scottish government. Both Wells and Ruane highlighted the existence of frequent meetings between their First Ministers and Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon which supports Birrell's (2012) argument that bilateral meetings between First Ministers are the most common form of devolved IGR between the two nations. Birrell's (2012) view that trilateral meetings are largely infrequent appears to be supported by Ford who reveals that his contact with Scotland as Minister for Justice is significantly less than with his counterpart in Ireland. He commented:

'...once a year I have a meeting with the Scottish Cabinet Secretary and the Irish Minister of Justice and Equality. I meet the Irish Justice Minister more regularly than that and I meet the Scots occasionally but I mean I have described that trilateralism that we all get together and complain about the Home Office.'

The British-Irish Council

As with devolved IGR, the same three respondents referred directly to the BIC in terms of IGR and there was little detail offered regarding its role and influence in the relationship between Northern Ireland and Scotland. However, there could be discerned a certain amount of positivity towards it in terms of the regularity of meetings which was particularly evident from the unionist and non-aligned perspective. Wells commented: *'...the relationship is good erm, we have the North/South, er, the East/West Council of the islands as it used to be called where*

the devolved administrations meet together regularly.' Regular BIC meetings were also highlighted by Minister for Justice David Ford. He stated:

'It was erm,...we worked out a complex set of arrangements in 1998 which involves power-sharing internally, North/South links, you know, the principle of consent applied to the UK link. Erm, and part of that is involved in things like the British-Irish council where Ministers from two sovereign states, three devolved nations and three crown dependencies meet regularly.' (Ford, 2015).

Former Minister for Education Ruane made it clear that the BIC is an integral part of Sinn Féin's political approach in the post-agreement era which supports Birrell's (2012) view that the party has been willing to participate in East-West institutions. She declared: *'...we have the British-Irish council so we're a member of that and Scotland are a member of that too.'* However, she places little emphasis on its role or influences, choosing instead to focus on North/South links which also adds weight to Birrell's (2012) view that nationalist parties gravitate towards institutions such as the NSMC. She declared:

'Our project...we have the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent agreements. We have the Assembly, which is the Assembly here in the North. We have the North/South Ministerial Council of which I was a member for four years, which is all the ministers on the island, and you have the British-Irish Council and then you also have the Human Rights and Equality Commissions. We signed up to that whole package not just to the Assembly so I think it's the right way forward. Erm, politically er, we support the North/South institutions and are very active in them.' (Ruane, 2015).

The lack of detail provided by Wells, Ford and Ruane on the role and output of the BIC suggests that its influence on Northern Ireland politics is minimal. Indeed, the only positive aspect of the BIC to emerge from the interviews is the regularity of meetings which merely suggests that the output of the Council may have moderately improved. It appears that the predominant focus for politicians in Northern Ireland in terms of IGR, whether unionist, nationalist or non-aligned is with Ireland, North and South. This is where the fear originates for unionists and the opportunity presents for nationalists. The fact that Sinn Féin are willing to participate in the BIC is significantly diminished by Ruane's comments regarding the NSMC and the clear preference of the party to engage with North/South rather than East/West institutions. Therefore, for Sinn Féin, the BIC is largely symbolic in terms of IGR. Similarly, Wells' reference to the BIC as the 'Council of the Isles' suggests that the symbolic nature of the Council endures for unionists.

Party political linkages

According to Birrell (2012) there is total party incongruence between Northern Irish and British state-wide parties. At the time of the interviews any links between parties amounted to that between the SDLP and the Labour party and more loosely between Alliance and the Liberal Democrats. In terms of IGR between Scotland and Northern Ireland it can also be seen that the issue of party incongruence is becoming increasingly problematic with the rise in Scottish nationalism and this has thrown into relief the widening ideological gap that exists between unionist parties in Northern Ireland and the SNP. This is evident in the remarks of Barr of the UUP who recognises that political incongruence between Scotland and parties on both sides of the unionist/nationalist divide are problematic and therefore limit the extent of linkage. Barr stated that there is no *'great political linkage between any of the parties. It's just...we know who to go and see when we need to ask something but no one's really linked.'* However, fringe unionist McNarry disagrees. He feels that *'there is a grave danger'* that Sinn Féin may capitalise on the impetus created by the referendum and suggested that they were seeking a *'Celtic coalition'* alongside the SNP and Plaid Cymru in Wales.

Ordinarily, McNarry's (2015) claims would be dismissed outright given the obvious contrast between Sinn Féin's particular brand of nationalism as opposed to the more progressive outlooks which exist in Scotland and Wales. However, as can be seen from the section above, Sinn Féin has had and plans to have a considerable amount of contact with political parties in Scotland and Wales and is clear that they would like to see both countries gain independence. Moreover, Dallat revealed that the SDLP are already considering such an alliance following the referendum. He stated that the SDLP *'will realign with the SNP and also with Plaid Cymru'* bringing *'a new synergy to politics in these islands'*. However, once again as Sinn Féin remain by far the most popular nationalist party in Northern Ireland, such an alliance is unlikely to happen.

Whilst new relationships and alliances with the SNP and Plaid Cymru appear to be desired by both the SDLP and Sinn Féin, it must also be considered that Scottish and Welsh nationalists might be unwilling to reciprocate such moves. Indeed, there is no evidence to suggest that such alliances were considered although a *'progressive alliance'* involving Plaid Cymru, the SNP and the Green Party was discussed in the event of a hung parliament following the General Election 2015 (Mason, 2015). As can be seen from section one the SNP in particular has been eager to distance itself from Northern Ireland politics. Barry reiterated the irrelevance of Northern Ireland politics to the SNP by describing Northern Ireland as *'a side-show and a distraction'* and not on the radar of either Salmond or Sturgeon who now have their sights set firmly on Westminster and a second independence referendum. He concedes that contact takes place in the BIC and that Sturgeon may visit Northern Ireland for the *'odd meeting'* yet Northern Ireland is *'not on the agenda'* of

the SNP. Moreover, Barry believes that the wariness of unionists towards the SNP coupled with the irrelevance of the SDLP and Sinn Féin to Scottish politics has led Sturgeon and the SNP to the conclusion that *'we're not going to bother with Northern Ireland'*.

It is clear that the rise in Scottish nationalism and the holding of the Scottish independence referendum has acted as a catalyst for Northern Irish nationalists to try and advance their own political agendas. For both Sinn Féin and the SDLP the attempt to create new alliances with Scotland and Wales can be seen as being a potential vehicle for Irish unity and in the case of the SDLP, to provide a stimulus to an otherwise floundering political strategy at home. The potential for either party to gain a toe-hold in Scottish politics is unlikely given that the SNP wishes to disassociate with Northern Ireland (Bradbury, 2015; Keating, 2014). Simultaneously, unionist parties and particularly the DUP are becoming further marginalised from Scottish politics and this has been exacerbated by the decimation of fellow unionists Scottish Labour and the Scottish Liberal Democrats in the 2015 General Election. Indeed, this will also have had an indirect effect on both the SDLP and Alliance who share links with the British Labour Party and Liberal Democrats respectively (Birrell, 2012). The result is that all five major parties in Northern Ireland have become further isolated from Scottish politics and with a second independence referendum on the horizon the implications of this are significant. That said, of all parties represented in this study, the GPNI appears to enjoy a greater level of political linkage with Scotland than any other party. Barry stated:

'...in fact of all the parties on these islands, the party that we mostly probably interact with is probably the Scottish Greens erm, cos [sic] we're an all-island party. We're one party on the island but the main one that we here in Northern Ireland would link in with would be the Scottish in terms of policies and common campaigns against Faslane and nuclear dumping and so on.'

This reflects the relative inclusiveness of the GPNI in the referendum as highlighted in section one. However, this is of little significance to the overall impact of IGR with Scotland as at the time of writing the party is only represented by two MLAs in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The experience of devolution: a 'new' era in politics?

Somewhat ironically, respondents representing the two largest parties (Wells and Ruane) expressed a high regard for the Scottish devolutionary system. Wells for example described the Scots as being 'much more sensible' in their approach to devolution. He elaborated:

'The Scottish have a much more sensible system. They had a voluntary coalition of course with the 'Nats' and the Greens and Labour and the Liberal Democrats and they have a very sensible way with themed ministerships

rather than silos. What you have in Scotland is themed ministerships...a Minister for children's services and a Minister for the elderly who garners all of the strands of government around that theme about doing what's best for children and the elderly or the vulnerable or whatever and that is an excellent model which most democracies should follow. So whether it's under a Labour coalition or a Scottish Nationalist one-party government, it does seem to work much better than our model. Much better.'

The perception amongst Northern Irish politicians that Scotland's experience of devolution is far more successful and productive than theirs continues into the realm of policy-making. On the whole, the majority of respondents felt that Scottish policy-making had been influential in Northern Ireland politics but the extent of that influence was contested. For nationalist Sinn Féin (with similar social policy outlooks to the SNP) the Scottish system is seen as being influential on Northern Ireland but that there was further scope for greater influence. Indeed, Ruane highlights the constraints of parity in holding back further Scottish influence as highlighted by Birrell, (2012). She stated:

'Yes. I think... though I'd love to see it influencing it more. I think the Scottish have some of the most interesting policies. It's democratic, I like their education system...erm, so yes, definitely. I think the Scottish have an interesting way of doing things erm, and they're not afraid to think outside the box and the instinct here in the past and it's changing a little bit, would have been we have to have parity. Parity with England, Scotland, Wales...and the minute you break parity, you're on the road to a united Ireland!' You know, so, whereas, you go 'well hold on a minute, the Scottish are doing it a bit differently and the Welsh are doing it a bit differently so what's this obsession with parity? Why do you want to have parity with something that isn't working? You know, so...yeah I think the Scottish are very interesting, and their policy.'

Several unionist respondents (Sugden and Barr) highlighted the demographic similarities between Scotland and Northern Ireland as being a significant factor when considering policy making. Sugden for instance commented:

'...when there're certain policies in Northern Ireland and we're considering them, we always do look towards Scotland and the other devolved institutions. Probably more to Scotland than Wales cos [sic] I think it's more applicable to Northern Ireland with the demographics and the makeup of it.'

Ford agreed that in general terms, policy making in Northern Ireland considers the output of other devolved nations and also the Republic of Ireland. However, as Minister for Justice, he also highlighted the inherent difficulties that can be encountered in applying Scottish policy to what are fundamentally different systems in Northern Ireland. He stated:

'When I became Minister, the policies around justice had been whatever they did for England and Wales last year the NIO will introduce for Northern Ireland this year...even though in justice issues we have a bit of a difficulty because the Scottish justice system is so different from ours whereas England and Wales and both parts of Ireland have very similar systems. I mean our general policy is we look to see what there is to learn from whoever and that sometimes can be the Scots even if we cannot apply Scots directly in so many cases just because the way the system works but I think across other departments it has that same kind of thing that you would look to see what's best and if the Scots can do things slightly differently and it seems to work....You know, the nature of our society is more similar to Scotland largely than it is to England so there's that sort of presumption that people will look that way as well.'

Both Barry and Wells are clear that there has been no influence from Scotland in terms of policy making in Northern Ireland and both elites find this lamentable. Wells for instance indicates that he has been monitoring the Scottish system closely. He declared: *'the Scottish Nationalists, for all their faults do get their legislation through, do have a fairly sensible approach to health and social services which I've been watching very carefully and their outcomes are very good.'* Similarly, Barry refers to the Scots as 'pioneers' of policy making and like Wells, feels that their approach to health care and social issues has been particularly noteworthy. He commented: *'Scotland has been so much more innovative and progressive and moving forward whether its health care, tackling poverty and so on.'* Such opinion is also held by Dallat who feels that Northern Ireland lags well behind Scotland in terms of effective and innovative policy making. Barry makes a further interesting point regarding the 'special' status of Northern Ireland and which perhaps highlights the limitations of the extent of policy transfer which can take place between the two countries. Barry observed:

'It's about trying to recognise that Northern Ireland is a special case you know. We have people here who are on high levels of disability allowance, high levels of psychological trauma associated with the conflict. We are not the same as any other part of the UK. We do need you know, special dispensation in terms of whether it's the bedroom tax or welfare reform in my view shouldn't go ahead. We should scrap Trident you know rather than scrapping people's DLA but if welfare reform is to er, happen it should certainly happen in a much more measured and softer way in Northern Ireland than other parts of the UK.'

Only one respondent was able to point to any examples of policy learning between the two nations which in itself appears to confirm Keating & Cairney's (2012) suggestion that policy transfer is difficult to identify. Community planning was highlighted by Barry as having originated in Scotland. He stated: *'Scotland has led*

the way on community planning and we thank them for that because now we, in Northern Ireland have benefitted from community planning being devolved to local government and it's basically trying to you know, er, echo and ape the Scottish system.' Moreover, considering that politicians were interviewed following the Scottish independence referendum which had been the first major British election to lower the voting age to 16 (see Mullen, 2014), only Ruane of Sinn Féin appeared to acknowledge this fact. She was clear that her party support such changes for Northern Ireland and remarked: *'Oh yeah we're big supporters of it. Yeah, look there (points to a poster on the wall of her office). Yeah I'm big into it.'* However, she goes on to explain that any future lowering of the voting age would be an excepted rather than a devolved matter thus highlighting the fact that policy innovation is still being stifled by constraints.

Whilst the post-referendum relationship between Scotland and the DUP and Sinn Féin appears to be amicable, in terms of IGR, there appears to be a lack of common political interest between the two countries with much of the contact between them taking place informally at First-Ministerial and ministerial level on matters largely restricted to economics. Similarly, the role and influence of the BIC in Northern Ireland politics appears to be minimal and therefore is unlikely to be the source of any significant policy exchange or innovation between Northern Ireland and Scotland. Indeed, both Wells and Ruane view the BIC as a largely symbolic institution rather than an effective forum for cooperation and policy transfer. Party political linkage between Scotland and Northern Ireland also remains minimal as only the GPNi appear to share any significant relationship with their sister party in Scotland. Indeed, attempts by the SDLP to form an Alliance with the SNP are unlikely to succeed given that the SNP are unwilling to associate with Northern Ireland politics and as such party political incongruence is likely to remain problematic in terms of IGR between both nations for the foreseeable future.

Section Three

The significance of non-institutional links between Scotland and Northern Ireland

The following section explores politicians' views on the potential significance of the non-institutional links between Scotland and Northern Ireland. The literature consistently suggests that such links exist predominantly amongst the unionist community although as Walker (1995) argues, residual connections could potentially remain salient for nationalists. The chapter examines four specific areas identified as being of common significance to the two countries; culture and identity, history, religion and personal family ties. Further, it explores the extent to which a common connection exists between the two countries in the form of sectarianism. The section argues that the cultural and historical links between Scotland and Northern Ireland are well-established due to migration between the two countries at various times throughout history. However, the politicisation of both the Ulster-Scots identity and

language appears to be problematic for many participants (including some unionists) who struggle to find either cultural or political significance in either. Sectarianism is recognised as being problematic for Scotland yet its manifestation (largely in Old Firm football matches) is generally considered to be of much less significance than that which exists in Northern Ireland.

Culture, identity and historical migration

The majority of participants felt that the cultural connection between the two countries was of greater significance to unionists and that historical migration was a central factor in this. Allister remarked that *'in historic times there was a lot of interplay between Scotland and this part of Ireland'* and that many of the past generations in Northern Ireland came from Scotland. He stated that *'there is a cultural affinity with a lot of Scottish things'* in Northern Ireland which manifests in *'a very vibrant Ulster-Scots culture'* and where, in parts of the province *'you wouldn't know whether you were in Scotland or Northern Ireland.'* Allister added that *'most of those (manifestations), from what I could discern tended to be unionist in orientation in Scotland rather than erm, nationalist.'*

Several respondents viewed the Plantation of Ulster in 1609 as a significant event in Ulster-Scots culture which resonates with the views of Holmes (2009). Barry remarked that *'...most of the descendents of the Unionist community here in Northern Ireland came from Scotland; the names are the same, there's a familiarity, people go back and forth...'* He added that descendents of Scottish Planters *'still hold their Scottish identity very dear to them...'* Indeed, Sugden agreed that as a result of the Ulster Plantation, many unionists *'would say that they have an Ulster-Scots within them'*.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, only Barr of the UUP referred to the pre-Roman period of migration between Scotland and Ulster as being significant to unionists. He remarked that *'people have been coming back and forth from Scotland for nearly 2000 years, since anyone worked out how to float a canoe or a bit of log they were sailing back and forward.'* He referred to the ancient kingdom of Dalriada *'which linked Scotland and the North East of Ulster'* and which was essentially *'the same piece of land'*. Barr draws parallels between Dalriada and the Greek Empire as *'it was a sea-born empire cos [sic] it was easier to sail than it was to go over land...'*

From the nationalist perspective, Dallat also recognised the importance of historical migration between the two countries describing the *'to-ing and fro-ing'* as *'highly significant'*. He highlighted several historical connections such as inter-marriage, land deals and exchange as well as *'fights'*. He appears to suggest that a combination of Irish history and the partition of Ireland almost put an end to the connection between Scottish and Irish nationalists which in his view is *'a sad thing'*. However, Dallat also feels that following the Scottish independence referendum, this connection is *'reawakening now and that's good for everybody'*. He also noted that

large parts of Northern Ireland and Scotland are culturally similar and believes that this is reflected in a renewed focus on the part of the tourist boards to promote such connections. Clearly, for Dallat the referendum has provided an opportunity for Northern Irish nationalists to rekindle their cultural links to Scotland. Indeed, he concluded that *'...we're developing I think a group of islands that have a lot in common and could have done without maybe the history of the past but history's to be learned from'*.

Ulster-Scots culture

The interviews suggest that there is a variance in politicians' knowledge of Ulster-Scots culture. Three respondents (Barry, Barr and Wells) appear to be particularly knowledgeable and therefore describe many cultural links between the two countries. Others seem less aware and indeed less convinced. Sugden for instance feels that Ulster-Scots influences are *'subtle'* yet is still able to list some links. A wide range of Scottish traditions and influences were described including traditional Scottish dancing, music, parades and events. Wells for instance highlighted the celebration of Burns Night amongst the Protestant community in Northern Ireland. Parades were also mentioned particularly in relation to celebrations surrounding the 12th of July in which *'people fly the Scottish flags here'* (Sugden, 2015). For Barr, the influence of Scottish pipe bands is of particular significance again in relation to parades both in Northern Ireland and North America. He was keen to state that these pipe bands are a Scottish rather than Irish tradition *'that we in Ulster have from our Presbyterian roots.'*

Additionally, both Barr and Barry referred to a shared mythology between Scotland and Northern Ireland. Barr for example talks about the *'big men of Ulster'* as *'fearsome warriors'* who were a class apart whilst Barry highlighted the fact that the Giant's Causeway is believed to be an ancient land bridge between Ireland and Scotland and which of course is one of the major tourist attractions in Northern Ireland.

There is also a suggestion from several participants that the Ulster-Scots connection may be felt more keenly in certain parts of Northern Ireland than others. Sugden for example commented: *'I do think we have a lot of similarities but it depends on what part of Northern Ireland you're in.'* She did not elaborate however, Barry feels that the Ulster-Scots identity is particularly strong in the North East of Northern Ireland which is consistent with the views of Walker (1995) and Holmes (2009). Barry commented: *'...an Ulster-Scots identity is very real, particularly in the glens of Antrim and the North Antrim coast where people are very close to Scotland. Rathlin Island where you know, Robert the Bruce stayed and so on'*.

This view is shared by Wells who also described parts of the North East of Northern Ireland as having *'a huge affinity'* with Scotland. Wells remarked that *'a large proportion of people living in Antrim and East Down came from the Scottish*

Highlands, in my own constituency (South Down) came from the Scottish Lowlands.' The geographical proximity of Scotland and Northern Ireland therefore appears to be a significant factor for some politicians in reinforcing the cultural connection between both countries. Wells for instance shared his own personal experience of operating boat trips to Scotland from Ballycastle on the Northern coast of Northern Ireland declaring that *'you can see Scotland from Ballycastle'*. Barr also stated that *'...you can see Scotland from Northern Ireland. I mean when you go to the North East you can see it so it's not some faraway place from any of us.'* Similarly, Barry pointed out that *'...from where I live in North Down I can see Scotland on a good day and that just gives you a sense of how close the islands are and erm, so therefore it just underscores the importance of that link between Scotland and Ireland'*. Indeed, Barry also mentioned that such proximity between the two nations meant that he could *'get Scottish radio fairly easily'* which would also act as cultural reinforcement for those living nearest to Scotland.

It is clear that many unionist respondents and Barry of the GPNI feel that there is a strong connection between Scotland and Northern Ireland which exists in the form of Ulster-Scots culture. Indeed, as Allister commented: *'There certainly is an Ulster-Scots culture, unmistakably so'*. Moreover, both Barry and Barr are certain that the Ulster-Scots identity *'is very real'*. Even Dallat, albeit somewhat tongue-in-cheek declared that it is not a construction. However, it can also be discerned that not all politicians are wholly convinced of the authenticity of Ulster-Scots. Sugden for example highlighted the politicisation of the culture. She stated: *'Interestingly enough, Ulster-Scots in Northern Ireland doesn't really have a label- it was given a label. It's only since 1998 you know one side has to have a culture and we have to have ours that a label's been put onto it.'* Such opinion is also held by Ford who also recognises a cultural connection with Scotland but is unsure of its authenticity. Ford declared:

'I'm not sure it's an identity...teaching children about their cultural background and introducing them to the poetry of not just Burns but some of the weaver poets of County Antrim is one thing and it's an entirely legitimate part of cultural background but I think you can overstate that and I think there are a lot of campaigners who are significantly overstating it.'

This suggests that despite the historical links of Scottish migration to Northern Ireland during the Plantation, some politicians, including unionists still question the authenticity of the Ulster-Scots culture. Indeed, for some, the politicisation of the identity appears to have greatly reduced the significance of the culture for many politicians in Northern Ireland.

Religion and sectarianism

Several participants (Barry, Wells and Barr) identified a religious link between Scotland and Northern Ireland in the form of the Orange Order. This was mainly

evident in the responses of Wells and Barr as Barry made only a passing reference to the fact that *'Orange parades happen in Glasgow and Edinburgh and they happen here as well.'* Both mainstream unionists referred to a strong Orange Order presence in Western Scotland with Wells also acknowledging the interchange between Orange Order members particularly with regard to parades. Wells commented: *'...the Orange Order is very strong in Western Scotland and in Northern Ireland and they would come over for our twelfth and we'd go over for their first Saturday in July...'* Barr was equally certain of this cultural connection and stated *'it's a big thing particularly in the West of Scotland, particularly in greater Glasgow. We also have presences in Ayrshire and Fife and different parts of Scotland. It's part of their culture. It's there.'*

In terms of the religious connection between the two countries, Barr was the only participant to talk in any great length on the subject. He feels that the Presbyterian connection between Scotland and Northern Ireland is linked to the Plantation which is consistent with the view of Holmes (2009). Barr remarked: *'I mean a significant portion of the people of Northern Ireland are of Scottish extraction, the Presbyterian church is the largest church in Northern Ireland in terms of membership...'* Moreover, Barr proudly highlighted the role of the descendents of these Ulster-Scots in various battles and wars throughout history which, according to Holmes (2009) is reflective of the classic Ulster-Scots narrative. He declared:

'Erm, if you look at the history of Northern Ireland and you look at what happened with the plantation from 1607 onward there were literally tens of thousands of us landed here. The Presbyterians were the 'shock troops'. They basically took the hits for that century, they fought at the Derry they fought at the Boyne and once they got beyond it erm, the Anglican church started to assert itself again and the Presbyterians became sort of victims of the Anglican church and by 1720 we were all getting on the boats and going to America. So we ended up in Washington's army and these were people who were fighters, they were strong, they were tough, they were exactly the sort of people you would put on a frontier because they were on a frontier here in 1609. They were on a frontier in America and these were the guys that pushed West and South into America. They were the Indian fighters, you know it was Davy Crockett all those guys- all Ulster-Scots names...'

Perhaps as a reflection of the contentious debate which currently surrounds the subject of sectarianism in Scotland, only half of respondents referred to the issue. Of these, (Wells, Barr, McNarry, Barry and Dallat) the majority of comments were brief and merely acknowledged the existence of sectarianism both in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Indeed, such a response is typified by Barry who, when asked whether he felt that the two countries were culturally similar replied: *'Er yeah absolutely. I think you know, whether it's the sectarianism between Protestants and Catholics...'* Dallat offered little further detail in his remarks. He stated: *'I think that Scotland and Northern Ireland have similar challenges and they have similar*

problems. I mean certainly sectarianism within Northern Ireland is well known, maybe it's not so well known in Scotland and maybe it's not so well addressed.'

Football was used as an analogy by both Wells and Barr to underscore the importance of religious affiliation to the game in Scotland and particularly Glasgow. Wells for instance highlighted the fact that *'more people go on the ferry every Saturday or Sunday to watch Celtic or Rangers than watch all of the football games in Northern Ireland.'* For Wells the significance of the 'Old Firm' rivalry is clearly a reflection of Northern Irish sectarianism as he stated that *'half of Northern Ireland supports Glasgow Celtic and the other half (including myself) supports Glasgow Rangers'*. He added that *'if you're born in one community you're naturally a Rangers supporter and if you're born in the other...I mean I've never met a Catholic Rangers supporter and I've only met one Protestant Celtic supporter...'*

Similarly, Barr also used the sport as an analogy to describe and explain the outcome of the Scottish independence referendum. He essentially saw the hostility between Glasgow Celtic and Glasgow Rangers as being reflected in the 'yes'/'no' vote. He noted that many areas of Glasgow which would have traditionally been seen as Labour and therefore unionist strongholds voted for independence and prompted him to state that *'my God, it's a Celtic vote. It's Celtic, they voted to take the flag down'*.

Barr goes further to suggest that the violence which erupted in Glasgow's George Square following the referendum result was sectarian in nature. He remarked that *'...faces were being recognised from football trouble you know, it was like this is not a good scene, this is definitely splitting down...'* He then draws a direct comparison between the violence which erupted in George Square and that which occurred during Northern Ireland's 'troubles'. Moreover, he appears to suggest that whilst sectarianism is considered as being somewhat normal for Old Firm football matches, its appearance in mainstream Scottish politics is novel and also worrying. Barr stated:

'...and then when the 'no' campaign won what was in the square was literally something out of here in 1969. It was just...I mean most Scots were completely... that angle's never emerged in Scottish politics ever even in the horrendous days here. It never ever touched the Scots. Bit of football, no problem, Rangers/Celtic fine. That was the first time mainstream politics had gone that way.'

Ulster-Scots Language

The majority of respondents from across the political spectrum (Allister, Barr, Sugden, Wells, Barry, Ford and Dallat) agree with much of academia that the current status of Ulster-Scots is that of a dialect rather than a language. Fringe Unionist Jim Allister summed up the overall mood by stating: *'I'm not sure it's a language. There*

are dialects and other things but er, to piece that up to call it a language I think is stretching it a bit quite frankly' (laughs).

With the exception of Wells and Barr, the majority of these respondents also appeared to suggest that Ulster-Scots had become politicised as a result of the GFA which supports the theory of McCall (2002). Whilst Ford recognised that *'there clearly is a cultural issue'* he remarked that it had been *'used by some people to be quite a significant political issue'*. Moreover, he was equally blunt on the status of Ulster-Scots stating that because *'nationalists have got the Irish language, we have to pretend that Ulster-Scots is a complete language and so on and so forth. It's not, it's a dialect.'* Ford's perception that the significance of Ulster-Scots has become politically exaggerated is shared by Barry who also points out that *'very few people speak it'* despite political promotion by the DUP and also considerable financial backing. He referred to Ulster-Scots as *'a symbol of a sense of separate identity and a link with Scotland'* for unionists yet believes that the weight given to Ullans as a language cannot be sustained as it is a dialect. That said, Barry is clear that the negativity attached to the language does not detract from the authenticity of the Ulster-Scots culture or identity.

Numerous respondents appeared to find the subject of the Ulster-Scots language as being amusing. For instance, the remarks of Allister outlined above are punctuated with laughter. This type of reaction was common to politicians from across the political spectrum. Both Sugden and Ford described Ulster-Scots language as *'funny'* and therefore something of a joke. Sugden for instance remembered in her youth *'taking the hand out of'* inhabitants of a nearby town *'because they spoke funny'*. Only later in life did she realise that this *'really thick accent was an Ulster-Scots dialect'*. Ford's comments also appear to support McCall's (2002, p.203) view that Ulster-Scots is perceived as being *'backward, premodern and rural'*. He described joking with his wife's relations (who hail from rural County Antrim and therefore use Ulster-Scots) *'that they use funny farming terms for things'* and that such an approach is normal and *'one of those things you joke about.'*

Dallat also remarked that he currently lives in a plantation town and joked about the Ulster-Scots dialect being difficult to decipher. However, he also points to the existence of *'pockets'* of Ulster-Scots in the Republic of Ireland which appears to support the views of Dowling (2007) and Stapleton & Wilson (2004) that the language is not exclusive to unionism and Protestantism. This raises further questions over the effectiveness of its use in the Ulster-Scots cultural revival as highlighted by McCall (2002).

The comments of Allister and Sugden already suggest that there is a continuance in unionist scepticism towards Ulster-Scots as put forward by McCall (2002). Indeed, the responses of Wells and Barr further support such a stance. For instance, when asked to comment on the cultural similarities between Northern Ireland and

Scotland, Wells of the DUP chose to highlight the linguistic link between the two countries. However, Wells was clear in his response that he has no personal experience of Ulster-Scots and more importantly, identifies the status of Ulster-Scots as a dialect and not a language. He commented: *'...so yes there's a huge affinity...Ulster-Scots dialect which I don't speak but some MLAs are very good at.'*

Barr of the UUP is perhaps even more dismissive of Ullans, appearing to question its place within a modern 21st century Northern Ireland. This is particularly interesting given that the revival of the Ulster-Scots language and identity was championed by former UUP elite Ian Adamson. Barr declared:

'The language we're hearing now, there's no point in trying to breathe life into something that's gone. Erm we, in the 21st century it's the BBC, the national broadcaster, I mean we trade with Europe, we trade with America and we trade with the world and our own language is English and er, whilst it's fine to respect your culture and the past you have to say, are we going to, you know look forward or look back? Let's celebrate the past and cherish it. For the enthusiasts who want to speak it, so be it, there's no point in erm...I don't see anything...I mean go to Glasgow, go to Edinburgh and they're not speaking what Burns spoke and wrote, they're speaking modern English in local dialect. The language aspect of Ulster-Scots, it's there but erm, I don't see it as anything other than a tenet of the English language which is what we speak here. Then you recognise the Irish language, well, again they can make their case.'

Family ties

Only a small number of participants reported the existence of actual family ties with Scotland. Wells stated: *'...lots of family contacts. I have a brother for instance living in Dunfermline...'* Similarly, Dallat remarked: *'...I have a daughter lives in Glasgow for several years...'* Interestingly, both respondents qualified these Scottish ties with personal experience of visiting the country. Wells for instance stated that *'we would holiday there'* whilst Dallat indicated that *'I've also been a visitor to that part of the world, cos [sic] I absolutely love the islands...'* This personal experience of Scotland is shared by Barry as a result of his university education and is used as grounds to accentuate the links between the two nations. He stated: *'my PhD is from Glasgow for example so I know Scotland quite well and in many ways, the Irish, not just the Northern Irish, the Irish as a whole and the Scots have a lot in common.'*

Despite a lack of actual family ties with Scotland, Barr, when questioned on the potential loss of Scotland following the independence referendum referred numerous times to the Scots in general as 'family'. He declared: *'obviously as we would say, as more than friends, as family, we wanted them to stay...'* Indeed, he went on to describe the Union without Scotland as being *'like a family bereavement quite literally'*. Barr, like Wells, Dallat and Barry evinced the close relationship between

both countries in terms of education and travel. He added: '*Some go to school there or go to university there or family holidays there so it's not some remote place for us...*' Such comments appear to resonate with Delaney's (2007) view that the post-war migration network between Scotland and Northern Ireland retained significant links to the homeland and that the proximity of both countries keeps these networks fluid and open.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

By utilising primary data collected from semi-structured interviews with senior politicians in Northern Ireland, this study examined their perceptions of Scotland's political and cultural influence on the province. These interviews and therefore the data were grounded in academic theory. The study concentrated on three main areas of research. As the initial theme of the project, it began by examining the reactions of politicians to the Scottish independence referendum before moving on to assess their views on the significance of the institutional and non-institutional links between the two countries. By being underpinned by academic theory and informed by primary data, this study addresses significant gaps in scholarship not just with regard to the Scottish independence referendum but more widely in the complex political and cultural relationship which exists between Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Scottish independence referendum was a significant event for Northern Ireland's politicians. However, despite the considerable implications of Scottish independence for the region, all political parties in Northern Ireland were largely uninvolved in the referendum campaign and wider debate. This was for two main reasons. Firstly, there was a perception amongst elites that any political interference on their part would be unhelpful to their Scottish counterparts on either side of the campaign. Respondents representing both the DUP and UUP; Sinn Féin and the GPNI reported being unwilling to become overtly involved in the campaign choosing instead to let the democratic nature of the referendum unfold and to allow the Scots determine their own future.

Secondly, some parties were excluded from participation in the referendum. Ford reported that the non-aligned and progressive Alliance Party had been discouraged from becoming involved by the Scottish Liberal Democrats. Similarly, Dallat of the more moderate nationalist SDLP stated that his party had approached the SNP with an offer of assistance prior to the referendum and had been rebuffed. The reluctance of parties allied to both the Better Together and Yes Scotland campaigns to engage with the more moderate parties in Northern Ireland indicates that any such exclusion would extend to all parties in the region and particularly the more extreme DUP and Sinn Féin. However, the primary data is inconclusive as to whether these parties independently adopted a cautious approach to the campaign or whether such approaches were a result of prior exclusion by Scotland or simply because other parties had been rebuffed. Therefore, Bradbury's (2015) claim that unionists and nationalists sought to capitalise on the referendum to advance their own long-term agendas may well be true but is beyond the scope of the interview data. Indeed, this gap may provide an opportunity for further study particularly in light of the possibility of a second independence referendum. The important point is that all parties in Northern Ireland were disengaged from the referendum campaign and this was

either as a direct or indirect result of Scotland's will to disassociate with Northern Ireland's sectarian politics.

As a result of such exclusion, the impact of the referendum on Northern Ireland politics was minimal. With the exception of the SDLP, participants representing all parties reported little or no change in party outlook or strategy following the referendum result. Wells made it clear that the DUP were prioritising the numerous political crises occurring in the region above all else and was keen to move on from events in Scotland. Similarly, Ruane remained focused on Sinn Féin's long-term political project of a united Ireland. As such their dichotomous relationship is unlikely to change following the referendum. That said, contrary to the views of Bell (2014) and Cartrite, (2012) the referendum has stimulated Irish nationalism in Northern Ireland and could be potentially problematic for the region particularly in light of a second independence referendum. This was recognised by Allister and also McNarry who suggested that Sinn Féin may seek to capitalise on the impetus generated by the referendum by forming a 'Celtic Coalition' with fellow nationalists Plaid Cymru and the SNP. There is no evidence to suggest that such an alliance has been considered however, Dallat reported a fundamental change in his party's strategy which would involve the realignment of the SDLP with both the SNP and Plaid Cymru. That said, given the inferior electoral position of the party in relation to Sinn Féin and the unwillingness of the SNP to engage with Northern Ireland's sectarian politics this is unlikely to happen. In summary, the interaction of Northern Irish politicians with the referendum has been minimal partly due to their reluctance to become involved in the campaign and perhaps more importantly, because of the unwillingness of Scottish parties to include them.

Due to devolution, there are distinctive sets of arrangements that allow for institutional, political and inter-governmental relations between Northern Ireland and Scotland which cover a range of areas. However, despite the often elaborate institutional nature of the frameworks governing these relationships, they are not that significant to Northern Ireland's politicians. Whilst the post-referendum relationship between Scotland and the DUP and Sinn Féin appears to be amicable, in terms of IGR, there appears to be a lack of common political interest between the two countries with much of the contact between them taking place informally at First-Ministerial and ministerial level on matters largely restricted to economics. Similarly, the role and influence of the BIC in Northern Ireland politics appears to be minimal and therefore is unlikely to be the source of any significant policy exchange or innovation between Northern Ireland and Scotland. Indeed, both Wells and Ruane view the BIC as a largely symbolic institution rather than an effective forum for cooperation and policy transfer.

Ironically, representatives of the DUP and Sinn Féin felt that the Scottish devolutionary system is much better than that which exists in Northern Ireland, particularly in terms of policy making. Indeed, many participants perceive Scottish

policy making to be innovative and progressive. Several unionists highlighted the fact that Northern Ireland does look to Scotland in terms of policy making due to the demographic similarities between the two countries. However, others remarked upon the numerous factors which may constrain policy transfer such as the difference in systems, (Ford) the uniqueness of post-conflict Northern Ireland (Barry) and the retention of certain powers by Westminster (Ruane). With the exception of community planning, a general lack of awareness of all participants to examples and instances of policy transfer between the two countries underlines the relative insignificance of such issues to politicians in Northern Ireland.

Party political linkage between Scotland and Northern Ireland also remains minimal as only the GPNI appear to share any significant relationship with their sister party in Scotland. The post-referendum stimulation of Irish nationalism appears to have prompted Sinn Féin and the SDLP to nurture relationships with both the SNP and Plaid Cymru. Dallat revealed that such an alliance is currently being considered by the SDLP as an attempt to get back on electoral terms with Sinn Féin. However, with the SNP's lack of interest in Northern Ireland politics it is likely that any advances made by the SDLP in terms of forming such an alliance would be rejected as they were in relation to participation in the referendum campaign. Thus it must be concluded that there will be a continuance in mainstream party political incongruence between both nations for the foreseeable future ensuring that party political linkage remains a relatively insignificant connection between Scotland and Northern Ireland.

There are well-established cultural and historical links between Northern Ireland and Scotland due to migration between the two countries at different historical junctures. Most participants consider the cultural connection between the two countries to be of greater significance to the unionist community and that historical migration during the Plantation of Ulster appears to be central to this relationship. There is a distinct variance in participants' knowledge of Ulster-Scots culture. Barry, Barr and Wells agree that the Ulster-Scots culture is felt more keenly in the North East of Northern Ireland which is consistent with the views of Holmes (2009) and Walker (1995). This is largely due to the fact that the first Planters from Scotland arrived in this area and thus created the first Scottish colony there. Moreover, there is also a perception amongst elites that the geographical proximity of the North East of Northern Ireland to Scotland continues to reinforce the cultural connection between the two countries as these same respondents consistently stressed the ability to be able to see Scotland from this part of Northern Ireland.

The authenticity of the Ulster-Scots identity appears to divide the opinion of politicians. Indeed, unionists, in reaction to fears of an increased role for Dublin constructed for themselves an identity in opposition to political and cultural Irishness that drew on the historical links between Scotland and Northern Ireland to bolster their Britishness. However, despite this, and despite a significant Irish nationalist diaspora in Scotland, these too are not all that significant in either community and

there is no real purchase in them politically in contemporary terms. Similarly, many participants feel that Northern Ireland retains a linguistic connection to Scotland. However, despite Ulster-Scots recognition as an official language under the terms of The Agreement, most view it as a dialect and not a language. Essentially, due to the politicisation of Ulster-Scots many cross-party elites appear not to take the language seriously. As was found in McCall's (2002) earlier study, Unionist scepticism towards it still remains apparent and is epitomised in the response of Barr who challenges its current relevance in a modern, forward-thinking nation. Indeed, there appears to have been a reversal of UUP opinion on the issue of Ulster-Scots language which is now once again viewed as nothing more 'than a tenet of the English language' (see Nic Craith, 2001). Therefore, overall it can be said that the significance of Ulster-Scots language is declining in Northern Ireland and thus it is not a significant factor in the cultural link between both countries.

Historical migration has led to some commonality in terms of social phenomena such as sectarianism, but these play out in very different ways in both regions. Both Wells and Barr identified a link between Scotland and Northern Ireland in the form of Old Firm football matches which are well patronised by both sets of supporters in Northern Ireland. Wells was particularly clear that religious affiliation is central to the fanbase of both Glasgow Rangers and Glasgow Celtic. Football was also used by Barr as an analogy to describe the outcome of the Scottish independence referendum and the subsequent violence which erupted in Glasgow's George Square. Essentially, he sees the hostility between Rangers and Celtic as being reflected in the yes/no vote. Ultimately, only mainstream unionists identified a significant link between the two countries in terms of sectarianism and this connection exists largely within the confines of Scottish football. Barr's suggestion that sectarianism has extended into the realm of Scottish politics is perhaps more significant and raises the potential for further study, particularly as the issue of Scottish independence still remains salient today.

Recommendations

As a Master's project, this study was limited in the availability of time and resources able to complete it. As a result, although nine interviews were conducted with a range of cross-party politicians representing all the major parties in Northern Ireland, only one representative from each party was interviewed. The resulting data therefore lacks depth in terms of party politics and is limited to the perceptions of individual politicians. That said, the study has still identified specific areas of research which could be a useful starting point for further study. For instance, it has been discovered that the lack of engagement of political parties with the referendum campaign was a result of Scotland's reluctance to engage with Northern Ireland's sectarian politics. However, Bradbury's (2015) argument that unionists and nationalists sought to capitalise on the referendum to advance their own long-term agendas (with unionists believing they could lead the case for the Union) is beyond

the scope of the interview data and remains a salient issue whilst a second independence referendum remains on the political agenda of the SNP.

The apparent reversal of UUP policy on the issue of Ulster-Scots language presents another opportunity for further study as does Barr's remarks regarding the presence of sectarianism in mainstream Scottish politics following the outcome of the referendum result. Overall the study shows that Northern Ireland remains firmly entrenched in ethno-national politics. Thus, if the ties between Scotland and the region are to be developed then it is not for the political elite to develop such connections. Rather, civil society organisations could be the conduit for drawing a positive link between constituent parts of the UK.

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