


Introduction

Entering the Field

Derry, August 2008

The streets were already crowded around the Creggan shops when I arrived, despite being early. It was the first big parade I had attended as a participant and I felt conspicuous in my band uniform. My shirt, which was white, short-sleeved, button-down and too big on me, had the phrase ‘They were faithful and they fought’ embroidered in green above the front pocket. My trousers were black polyester with a green stripe running down the side of both legs. The side drum I carried, with a black leather strap looped over one shoulder, was heavy and made me walk with a slight limp as I avoided bumping into people. All around me, conversation was buzzing. In the background, I could hear the rat-a-tat-tat of the drums and the slightly fainter flutter of flutes as band members warmed up their instruments before the parade. I finally located my band on one of the streets bordering Bishop’s Field. Many of them stood in small groups chatting amongst themselves. A few of the more senior members, including the band’s leader, Jim, hovered between the band and a few official-looking parade stewards standing at the intersection of the road where the parade would officially form.

I was relieved to have finally found the band, and several members smiled at me as I sought out the other drummers. Brandon was tapping out complicated rhythms while his cousin, Jay, tried to keep up. I went and stood near Liam, who was smoking a cigarette and looked bored. This parade was an annual commemoration parade honouring and remembering the ten men who died on hunger strike in Long Kesh prison in 1981, and it was the first time the

parade was held in Derry instead of Belfast. The theme of the parade was: 'Civil Rights, Equality, Freedom: The Struggle Continues'. Speeches, public panel discussions, charity football matches, music and youth events and tours were scheduled over the few days leading up to the parade.

The parade stewards came over and spoke quickly to Jim, then headed off towards Linsfort Drive, the road intersecting where we gathered and on which the parade would pass by; our band would then integrate into the main body of the parade as it passed. Jim nodded to Elise, who called out to Liam and Steve, and the four of them began to gather everyone into the band's typical parade block formation: the colour party (flag-bearers) at the front, followed by two lines of three drummers, the two bass drummers, and finally the twelve flute players. When Jim was satisfied that everyone was in place, he went and took his own place as a 'fluter' at the back.

Waiting our turn to merge into the parade seemed to take an age. There were hundreds of people taking part: some carried flags; some held banners for various republican organizations or political groups (including Ógra Shinn Féin, Sinn Féin's youth wing); some carried photographs or name placards of the hunger strikers or others who had been killed during the Troubles. The name placards also included the age of the person when they died, and there was an overwhelming majority of children represented. There were fourteen republican bands participating in this parade. Finally, the stewards waved us forward and we were off. We were the second to last band in the parade line up.

Jim called out the first song, 'Mairead Farrell', about an IRA volunteer who was killed in Gibraltar in 1988. To my left Brandon played out the drum rhythms that heralded the beginning of a song. The cadence finished and, on cue, I lifted my sticks and the band began to play. The force of the sound and the melancholic melody of the song made my heart swell, and I heard the lyrics in my head: 'Do not stand at my grave and weep / I am not there, I do not sleep / Do not stand at my grave and cry / When Ireland lives, I do not die.' We had only recently mastered this song and I was nervous that we would make mistakes that would lead to a musical pile up, but the band seemed to be holding it together well so far. Directly in front of me, our colour party marched steadily and slowly, the Irish Tricolour in front.

The parade route was long, and though the day had started out overcast and cool it quickly turned warm and sunny. I was glad the band had decided not to wear our heavy jackets. The drum seemed to get heavier as the parade went on, winding down through Creggan's slopes into the Brandywell, and when there was a lull between songs, I found myself wishing for the next tune to be called out so as to pass the time more quickly. I was aware that people lined the streets almost the entire parade route, watching us intently. As I marched past, I tried to discern their expressions. Many were difficult to read, but they looked solemn and respectful. Some appeared happy, while others appeared to

be sad, particularly when they read the placards with children's names and ages up ahead. I felt an odd sense of pride in marching with the band despite the fact that I was not a native citizen of this country, nor did I consider myself a republican. I walked a little straighter and paid more attention to my playing.

As we made our way into the field near the Gasworks where Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Féin, was due to give a speech, I was struck by the huge posters of the hunger strikers' faces, spaced at intervals around the edge of the field. Lines of political ex-prisoners, dressed in white button-down shirts, black ties and black trousers, stood still and solemn. One by one, the bands entered the field and dispersed. Some headed for the chip van to buy food, some sprawled on the grass, exhausted by the long march. The National Hunger Strike March had ended. Ógra Shinn Féin's national organizer, Barry McColgan, later commented:

The huge turnout at the march has inspired everyone present; it will no doubt bring many new members and also encourage activists to go out and increase their activism, ensuring the successful conclusion of our struggle.¹

This commemorative act of parading has become an annual ritual and is representative of many commemorative parades that occur throughout the calendar year in Northern Ireland. A variety of elements serve to reinvigorate support for the republican movement: music that evokes remembrance and an emotional narrative of republican history; political speeches that motivate and inform Sinn Féin supporters and recruits; and the performance of parading that enacts and reflects core tenets of multiple republican identities comes together in a powerful ritual that has cultural and political implications on republican society in Northern Ireland.

This book is an anthropological examination of identity, music and commemoration expressed through the context of republican parading bands in Northern Ireland. As Northern Ireland endeavours to maintain its post-conflict status, the meaning of Irish republicanism is changing and its position is being reassessed. Among the rocky terrain of the country's political landscape, Irish republican culture has struggled to maintain continuity with the past, legitimacy in the present and a sense of community for the future. Throughout this book I will analyse how identity is mediated and group belonging is established through commemorations – like the commemorative parade described in the beginning of this chapter – that venerate and remember republican heroes. Music is almost always played at commemorations and is used as an idiom of political expression and a medium for educating younger republican generations about republican history. Narratives and memories of the past infiltrate all aspects of community identity and everyday life and create a republican historical narrative around which politics and identities are formed.

Finding the Field

My interest in republican bands and their music began when some friends and I went out one night to a local student bar in Belfast in 2001. A song came through the speakers, and though I did not recognize it my friends immediately cheered and began singing along. I was bemused by the reaction, particularly when I glanced round the room and noticed a few people getting up and leaving, apparently in disgust. A few even booed. I turned to the friend beside me and asked why the song was provoking such a reaction. 'It's the "Fields of Athenry",' he told me, 'It's about the Famine, but most people think it's a republican song. The people who walked out were probably Protestant.' I was amazed that a song could produce such strong reactions, but I had only been living in Belfast for a few months and only knew the surface details of what is commonly known as 'the Troubles'.² Intrigued, I began learning more and sought out republican rebel songs by attending venues where republican rebel groups played. At first I made these journeys with friends who had Irish names and whose families had republican histories, but as I wanted my research to reflect 'how two sides of an encounter arrive at a delicate workable definition of their meeting' (Crick 1982: 25), I felt this would be less complicated if I met and found my own contacts and connections. I was interested in how playing this music reinforced republican identity and how much of the music seemed to recount republican tragedies, yet few people seemed to find the songs sad or depressing. Instead, they seemed to regard the songs as a form of narrative history and motivation for the republican movement.

Eventually, as I made plans to begin formal research, I attended concerts and commemoration events on my own. In addition to rebel music groups who regularly played gigs with a standard of guitar, bass guitar and drums in select bars around Belfast and the rest of Northern Ireland, I discovered republican parading bands that accompany commemorations and other republican events. The parading bands played much of the same musical repertoire as the rebel groups, who exclusively played in bars and social halls, but the parading bands marched on the streets in uniform at commemorations and occasional fundraising events using only flutes and drums. I was surprised to realize that not many people outside of republicanism knew of the parading bands' existence, though they played an integral part at commemorative ceremonies.

In a country as geographically small (and as extensively studied) as Northern Ireland, I feel that investigation of republican bands provides key insights into how identities are negotiated, manipulated and perceived within the culture of republicanism in Northern Ireland. By using republican bands as a focus, it is possible to witness how identities are negotiated and played out, how music is utilized to inform identity and political opinion through emotional expression, and how political rituals such as commemorations offer structure, a sense of belonging and support for the republican movement.

Despite extensive research on Northern Ireland, there remains a gap in scholarly analysis of the role that republican parading bands play both in the cultures of nationalism and republicanism and in wider society. Although definitions of republicanism are contested, the majority of republicans today would say that the primary goal of the movement is to see an end to Northern Ireland being a part of the United Kingdom, and for the 'island to be reunited and independent'.³ The splits that have occurred in the republican movement reflect the diversity of strategies in achieving that goal. The shifts from militarism to politics in different periods of history are embedded in the ideologies of different groups and are often at the roots of these splits.

Though there has been a proliferation of research on the Troubles, anthropology has largely ignored republican identity and its myriad expressions within music, parading and commemorative events.⁴ With the inauguration of a devolved government in May 2007, the splintered factions of republicanism have been adjusting to a post-peace process. Some factions, such as Sinn Féin, have since chosen mediation through politics and actively discourage violence as a political agenda. Far from denouncing their use of tactical violence in the past, they draw on historical narratives that legitimize their current position. As will be explained through these chapters, modifying this new role has required negotiation not only with other political players in Northern Ireland, but also within the republican movement itself.

There are four key issues addressed in this book. The first is how identities are mobilized and politicized in the contexts of community music-making and commemoration. The second looks at emotional processes and their manifestations and embodiments in ritual efficacy and performance in both parading and in a social context. Thirdly, memory and how it is employed as a means of developing historical narratives and engaging with the past for republican political and cultural purposes is discussed. Finally, the concepts of ritual and commemoration and the advancement of political agendas through the commemorative process are examined.

This book sets out to reveal the underlying layers that make up republican ideals through a context that has remained somewhat of a mystery to the wider world. S.S. Larsen, who has explored political and cultural division in Northern Ireland through parading, writes: 'as you move throughout Northern Ireland society you can *see* and *hear* the division, expressed through colours, objects and tunes' (1982a: 139). Larsen's observation points out the varied methods of communication that are used to express identity in 'the North', as it is commonly referred to by republicans and nationalists.⁵ Painted kerbstones, flags, slogans and symbols graffitied on walls denote territory, while murals and memorials construct a landscape of subtle division. With changes that have been taking place within Northern Ireland's government and society, I investigate how these subtle divisions and associated symbols are being renegotiated through republican

parading bands and the commemorations in which they participate. As band music rings out in neighbourhoods and city streets, how are messages of community, history, tradition, tragedy, intimidation and territory communicated and expressed? In what ways do republican parading bands reflect the ethos of republicanism, and what does the music that they play reveal about their perception of republican history and their position in the North? Just as Kay Kaufman Shelemay has queried in her own work on music and memory, I ask: 'What is remembered through music? How are the memories transformed during musical performance into meaningful acts of commemoration?' (1998: 12).

Music has long been a privileged sphere of cultural expression in Northern Ireland and a key marker in manifesting republican and nationalist identity. In particular, republican rebel songs provide a conduit that connects the republican community through the process of commemoration via the cultural mnemonic of music, which assists in strengthening the republican historical narrative. Here, I question and analyse the transmission of republican principles, beliefs and emotions that are communicated in republican rebel music and through commemorative events. Parading bands are in a unique position to encourage the participation of young people in the republican movement by bringing politics to the streets in a public display of identity and dedication to their political cause.

Methodology and the Construction of Ethnography

I had accumulated quite a few contacts in the republican community through previous research (Rollins 2006) and found that personal introductions through a mutual friend fared much better than 'cold' introductions. Within a couple of months I compiled a short list of possible bands to approach across Northern Ireland. Through further meetings and consistent attendance at commemoration parades and band practices, I narrowed my study to four bands: one each in the two major cities of the North, Belfast and Derry, and two residing in smaller, semi-rural communities. I conducted occasional interviews with band members outside these four bands and some of those interviews are quoted in this research; this 'additional data' provides a more rounded view of band life in general.

Initially, my methodology consisted mainly of observation and, as familiarity grew, interviews. Informal interviews were conducted in many places with a variety of people associated with republican parading or the republican movement in general. Where possible, these interviews were recorded using a minidisc recorder while also taking notes by hand, but in some instances, where the interviewee felt uncomfortable being recorded or where there was too much background noise for the recorder to pick up our voices for example, handwritten notes were taken to record the information. Semi-structured interviews worked well in a casual setting, and this method was preferred, because it encourages

openness by not constricting the conversation and gives the interviewee a feeling of confidence by accentuating that *they* are teaching *me* about what is important to them. I believe that, in this case, in allowing the 'interview' to develop naturally within the context of a conversation, band members then felt comfortable enough to explain their thoughts and emotions without feeling as if they were being scrutinized. It is also for this reason that the term 'informant' is not used to describe the people with whom I conducted research; as conflict, secrecy, collaboration and fear have been a part of life for so long in Northern Ireland, to use a term such as 'informant' would have been potentially ambiguous in a republican context. It is essential in qualitative research to develop a rapport of trust, interest and non-judgement to ensure good communication, and in locations of past or present conflict it is also essential to demonstrate discretion and to be clear about the aims and objectives of the research (see Aretxaga 1997; Feldman 1991; Jenkins 1983). It remained my goal throughout my field research to protect the people I studied and it continues in my present-day relationship with research participants.

A survey study was conducted in 2009, believing that if band members found an interview uncomfortable, perhaps they would be willing to submit their views anonymously on paper. The full survey is detailed in Appendix I, and the responses are separated according to male, female and unknown respondents. (Unknown refers to those who declined to state their gender.) Band members were asked to complete as many questions as they felt comfortable answering, and as a result, many left more than a few questions blank. Many chose not to elaborate on their answers when given an opportunity to do so, but this may have been as a result of the hurried conditions under which many completed the survey. Most of the surveys were filled out at band practices during a quiet moment before members left for home, tired and anxious for dinner. Some were filled out at commemoration events in between band performances and they were sometimes called away before completing the survey. Since no names were attached to the surveys, it was impossible to track down members to finish the questionnaires later. Therefore, I believe that for most members, it was time pressures that kept them from finishing the surveys and not concern regarding divulging information.

Persuading people to fill in the survey proved to be a difficult exercise, as many band members were hesitant to spend what little social time they had at practices and events performing a solitary activity. Out of 100 surveys that were sent out to eight different bands, a total of 66 were returned (covering a span of five different bands, containing members of all ages and from a variety of locations across the North).

Geertz (1973: 5) asserts that anthropology is 'not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning', and the nature of my study involved some precarious situations that required careful consideration

and delicate balance if I was to interpret the field accurately. I often had to monitor my own reactions when confronted with potential research hazards. Specifically, I am referring to the difficulty of remaining nonpartisan in highly politicized settings. Grills notes that in ‘the context of a local culture in which “you are either with us or you’re against us”, any claim of neutrality or appeal to the ideals of social science has the potential to be cast as opposition’ (1998b: 78). This was often a concern, particularly when challenged about my own political beliefs and alliances, and especially when those challenges were presented in less than ideal locations with interviewees whose beliefs about politics were far more passionate than mine. In most instances, Heaney’s advice was followed that whatever you say, say nothing,⁶ but often I was pushed for signs of allegiance and dedication to a political movement. And, as Grills found in his research, I have also been faced with ‘the anger, disappointment, and, at times, outright hostility of those involved in political campaigns and crusades’ (1998b: 78). I was careful never to lie about my position, but I also did not bring it up unnecessarily. Sometimes I used humour as a way of dissolving tension and lightening the tone of the question, and this was most successful when I pointed out my outsider status.

The fieldwork was begun officially in February 2008, although I had been attending parading events and chatting to attendees since September 2007. A friendship had developed with one band in particular (whom I refer to in this book as the Irish Patriots) and I often observed their practices or recorded their parading events in exchange for a copy of the footage. As Easter and the month of March approached, they began to seek additional marchers for the band and I suggested myself as a potential member. There was not enough time, according to them, for me to become a competent marcher by Easter but, by May, I had been given a uniform and told to attend practices regularly. I began as almost all but the youngest members begin: in the colour party. I had never carried a flag before. But, in my high school years in California, I had been an active member in the school’s marching band (and other music ensembles) for four years. In my junior year, I had auditioned and was accepted to an elite professional marching band but later had to drop out when they discovered I was two years younger than the age limit allowed. So I was familiar with marching bands and hard work, and my experience as a snare drummer, I thought, put me in an ideal position ten years later to learn how to become a republican band member. In fact, my early observations of band practices found me biting my tongue as inexperienced members marched out of step or drummers played with what I believed to be the ‘wrong technique’. However, I felt that by offering my opinions, I would not only be overstepping my welcome but I would be changing the course of how band members learned to play and how they engaged with their bandleader. That was something they were meant to teach me, not the reverse. As Finnegan noted:

It thus takes some detachment as well as self-education to envisage music right across the spectrum from ‘pop’ to ‘classical’ as equally valid, for this means refusing to accept any one set of assumptions about the ‘true’ nature of music and instead exploring each ‘world’ as of equal authenticity with others. (1989: 32)

I came to understand that although our ‘worlds’ of music were different, they were equally legitimate and no less real. Appreciating the playing of republican music by parading bands required an understanding of their musical goals, motivations and circumstances (see also Wulff 1998, 2007b).

I believe in the effective method of participant observation, and I wanted to ensure that my experiences as a band member in California did not cloud my experience of being a band member in Northern Ireland, so although I mentioned casually that I had played the drums and marched before, I did not elaborate and set about learning to march as if for the first time. With much coaxing on my part, I was eventually allowed to move onto the side drum. The teasing remarks I received as a female side drummer were easy enough to shrug off as I picked up the simple rhythms and cadences, but I was surprised to discover that my definition of good, ‘clean’⁷ drumming was, to some extent, what they were trying to discourage. Despite these occasional misunderstandings, I was given the impression that, ‘for a girl’, I was doing alright.

Although it is common in loyalist bands to limit the participation of women (Radford 2001; Ramsey 2009), republican bands typically do not impose such limitations. As the ratio of men to women in republican bands is roughly equal, any distinctions made in regard to gender are more subtle. In November 2008, my relationship with the band suddenly changed with the discovery that I was pregnant. I had worked hard to obtain the status of side drummer in the marching band, and pregnancy meant that I could no longer safely carry a heavy drum for long periods. The band received my news delightedly and they were less concerned than I at my relegation back to the colour party, a marching position usually held for newcomers and non-musicians.

While I was disappointed at giving up my position as a side drummer, I began to realize that my pregnancy placed me in a different light amongst my fellow band members, as well as among other band members with whom I conducted interviews, conversed and observed practices.⁸ The guarded nature of many republicans had meant that gaining their trust was a painstaking task of careful commentary (I could not appear to know too much about republicanism or being in a band, but often had to demonstrate I knew *something*); it also involved considerable participation in social activities (like fundraisers and other non-band events); and most importantly, I had to make friends – an assignment that fundamentally calls for trust and honesty, values that can feel compromised in ethnographic research (Sluka 2007a). Before they learned of my pregnancy, I

had to work hard to break into their social circles and, while I faithfully turned up at any and all commemoration events, my commitment failed to move them into spontaneous dialogue, and upon each meeting I had to 'break the ice' again.

Once they learned of my pregnancy, however, much of that changed for the better. I was quickly accepted at social gatherings with jokes about not being able to drink alcohol, and my husband, who often accompanied me at the events and was usually given only a cursory nod, was immediately subject to the gentle teasing of other 'dads'. Strangely, men were no longer uncomfortable to 'have a chat' with me, and women who previously had all but ignored me bestowed parenting advice. I welcomed the changes, but I also wondered how something like a pregnancy could elicit such a social metamorphosis, despite the obvious fact that pregnancies are, in general, good and happy news. Perhaps it was because disclosing the news of my pregnancy allowed band members a window into my life and circumstances. Scott Grills notes that in the field, the people with whom we conduct our research 'may be much more attentive to the various qualities of the researcher (e.g. trustworthy, humorous, friendly, open, and non-judgemental) than they are to the purpose of the research, consent forms, or credentials' (1998a: 12). While they may have had little desire to understand the exact nature of my research, my clear commitment to the band despite the lifestyle-altering status of a pregnancy communicated more to them than my explanations of anthropological discourse.

On the other hand, I felt there was another reason for my acceptance into the community. It was around the time of the Easter parades again when I was almost eight months pregnant and barely fitted into my band uniform that an offhand comment about my welfare during the parade brought it home to me: by being pregnant, I was no longer challenging any issues of perceived gender roles in the band. I had become 'place-able', a quality that my foreign-ness and my outsider status had obstructed (see Zerubavel 1997). Because they could not connect with me through place of birth (in California), or residence (which was in a 'neutral' area just off the city centre), or my family's lineage (I have no Irish ancestry), or the schools I attended (also in California, aside from my master's degree completed at Queen's University Belfast), I had left them with no discernible markers from which to draw assumptions and make associations. Warren asserts that 'the fieldworker's reception by the host society is a reflection of the cultural contextualization of the fieldworker's characteristics, which include ... ethnic, racial, class or national differences as well as gender' (1988, cited in Lee 1995: 73). While I looked the same and more or less acted the same and celebrated the same holidays, my background and political beliefs separated me from true integration.

Furthermore, I had inadvertently confused issues by taking on an instrument that is usually a male domain. Despite bandleaders' claims that women were fully welcome in the band⁹ (and they were), there were only two other

female drummers that I knew of, and only one of them played regularly in parades. (This is now changing, as will be discussed in later chapters.) Direct questions about how much gender mattered in republican bands were politely dismissed, or party lines about equality for both men and women members were cited. In fact, when I asked bandleaders how they felt about the participation of women in their band, many looked surprised and assured me it was a non-issue that women were and should be completely welcome. One leader explained:

[Bands] shouldn't think like that. That to me is being ... that's the same as being racist or sectarian or, you know, the thought shouldn't be in their head. To be honest, in my opinion, if I heard of any band saying that we don't want women in our band, I would be the first to go to the leadership of the movement and ask them to make them accountable for it. (Jim, in interview, 25 September 2007)

I wish to resist 'the tendency to employ gender as an explanatory catch-all' (McKeganey and Bloor 1991: 196). However, I will explore the implications of gender further in Chapter 3.

Over the course of eighteen months of fieldwork from February 2008 until the end of May 2009, I travelled all over the North (and several times to the South) attending just over fifty republican parades, practices, fundraisers and social events. I had calculated my fieldwork period to encompass two Easter parades, as the Easter parade is generally considered the main event in the republican calendar. Musicians of rebel music, whose music and lyrics illustrate republican narratives and promote the ideologies of republicanism, were engaged in conversation, which will be explained further in Chapters 5 and 6. I also gathered the opinions of new and long-time band members, those who decided to leave the bands and those who returned. Some members have switched into a different band, some play for more than one (albeit rarely) and a few asked me to come and join them (although concern for loyalty kept me from accepting).

A Note on Reflexivity, Ethics and Risk

As Weber (1946) has pointed out, the research we conduct is often tainted or contaminated by the values or views that we possess as products of our cultures and backgrounds, and this is something I have considered during my fieldwork and in writing this book. As someone with the unique vantage point of being both an insider and an outsider (though arguably more the latter), I am in a position to appreciate the multiple and complex issues that surround parading bands in Northern Ireland. Having lived in Belfast on and off for almost five years before embarking on my research, I observed parades with an outsider's curiosity and interest. When I began my research, I had already established myself in the

community as a friend, co-worker and music lover. My husband, who was born and raised in Northern Ireland, offered me a perspective of the North that existed before I enrolled as a postgraduate student, and by the time I undertook my master's degree in 2005, I felt comfortable calling Northern Ireland 'home'. In order to complete the transition into researcher, I had to reflect on what I had already learned about the republican community in Northern Ireland, my current position within it and the relationships that I hoped to create through the process of participant observation. Although my husband is from Northern Ireland, he had no direct connections to the republican community and it was several months before I allowed him to accompany me 'into the field'.

The fact of those challenges and confrontations consistently brought to mind the issue of ethics. I had been expecting band members and parade participants to be apprehensive about revealing their motivations for and feelings about joining the republican movement. On the contrary, most were comfortable discussing their political past. Before beginning an interview, I asked if I could record the conversation (often using humour to ease the nervous energy) on the basis that I would not name them by their true names or obvious identifiable details (like hometown or band membership) should I quote them in my research. On the whole, interviewees agreed to allow me to record the interviews as long as no one else had access to the tapes. Videotaping parades was also usually welcomed as long as a copy was offered to participating bands, and this proved an excellent way of introducing myself to bands I had not yet had the opportunity to meet as well as giving back to those bands who were kind enough to allow me to interview them. In some instances, for example when videotaping large parades, it was impossible to gain consent from everyone present. Like Ramsey (2009), I have taken the view that because parades take place in public spaces and in public view, the fact of participation is a form of consent.

The ASA Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice point out that: 'Most anthropologists would maintain that their paramount obligation is to their research participants and that when there is conflict, the interests and rights of those studied should come first'.¹⁰ It is, after all, the lives and practices of research participants that will be examined for further study. To this end, I have tried my best to maintain the trust and faith that was built during my fieldwork, and have tried to reflect as accurately as possible the comments made and the manner in which they were meant.

Though it has been argued that achieving total anonymity is next to impossible (Van Willigen 2002), either because of the closeness of the community or because the opinions someone expresses identifies them in some way, I have tried to conceal quotations and people with as much anonymity as I can. Therefore the names of the bands and individuals have been given pseudonyms and I have tried to gloss over any identifying details that may be too revealing, although the small size of the North and of the republican community makes

this difficult for those who know the culture. Occasionally, vague terms such as ‘a band in Belfast’ have been used, or a comment has been attributed to an anonymous member (i.e. ‘one band member told me ...’). Whilst this may not be sufficient to completely conceal a person’s identity, I believe that it has obscured the certainty by which any particular member could be identified. There are a few names that I have kept because they are public figures and their words are within the public domain.

On the subject of risk in the anthropological field, Lee (1995) points out that because anthropological research relies heavily on the anthropologist’s ability to ‘think on his or her feet’, often quickly and sometimes in precarious situations, that we are perhaps more susceptible to risk than a variety of other professions – especially if our research is conducted, as is so often the case, in areas that inflict risk to those being studied, such as in social conflict or in high-risk labour industries. Even those who conduct research similar to their habitual environment (i.e. an urban-dwelling Westerner researching urban Western culture) can be exposed to certain risk. Anthropology is a precarious discipline in the sense that research questions often reflect the personal lives of other humans; thus research conclusions or deductions may impact the lives of those with whom research is undertaken. Data is sensitive material and requires consideration for the people it represents.

Republicans have long been known for their militant and often physically violent approach to politics. This fact was not lost on me when I set out to research republican bands. I strongly believed (and continue to believe) that the best approach when embarking on sensitive fieldwork is honesty.¹¹ I found that as long as I was honest about my intentions and careful with the questions I asked and when these were asked, most people were willing to engage in conversation. More than once I found myself in the precarious position of being alone somewhere with someone who had a reputation for violence, with few or no witnesses. While it certainly crossed my mind in these moments that perhaps I should have thought more for my safety, on the whole I found the people I spoke with to be as honest with me as I was with them. Only once did I find myself on the receiving end of a violent threat, and that experience ensured that I was more careful in the future about how I asked the questions I wanted to ask, and my motivation for doing so. When fieldwork concluded, I continued (and continue) to visit and attend parades to demonstrate my gratitude and interest in their political pursuits. Northern Ireland has become my home and a few of my fellow band members have become friends, and as Jeffrey Sluka (2007b) discovered, the danger does not always go away when you exit the field.

Summary of Chapters

Throughout this book, the elements that impart aspects of republican culture and ethos and examine how they inform republican identities are explored. At

the heart of republicanism is the commemoration and memory of their heroes and their history, but understanding republicanism in its entirety requires delving into representative music and symbolism, community practices and identity. The chapters that follow detail several aspects of republicanism and, through my ethnographical experiences, offer a window into republican culture, lifestyle and beliefs.

Chapter 1 opens with a summary and brief discussion on the theories that are used throughout the book and which underpin the basis of this research. It begins with a discussion on the evolution of anthropological study on the island of Ireland to put my research into context; it then considers common theories of identity and how they are used to describe and understand aspects of my research experiences. This leads into a brief explanation of religious identity in Northern Ireland. Theories on collective memory, emotion, the narrative process and ritual and commemoration are outlined to place my investigations in context with current theory and to provide a thorough basis of understanding.

In the next chapter an abbreviated overview on republican history from the 1790s up to the twenty-first century is provided. Knowing the historical and political background of republicanism provides a chronological perspective of the movement and supplements necessary details in order to understand the changes that have influenced modern-day republicanism. There is an outline on the history of parading on the island of Ireland, focusing specifically on the North after partition. Parading has a long tradition in Ireland and its history reflects the impact parading has had on Northern Irish history and politics.

In the third chapter, the four bands that I observed closely during my fieldwork are introduced, and it is explained why they are representative of the majority of republican bands in Northern Ireland. The main reasons for joining a republican band and the motivation for maintaining membership, how its members learn to play, and how they conceive of the band as part of the community and as a political entity are all explored and discussed. Also considered is the role of young people and gender within the bands.

In Chapter 4, the theory of identity is expanded as I explore the expressed identities through parading and being republican. Using an ethnographic example of the annual Easter parades in Belfast, several aspects of republican identities are considered – such as perceptions of nationality, ethnicity and religion – in further detail.

Chapter 5 focuses on the genre of political music and discusses prominent themes in rebel songs as a method of categorization. Using examples of common rebel songs, the elements that characterize and define rebel songs are detailed and examined. These themes are investigated to relate to markers of republican identities and political ideologies. The term ‘rebel songs’ is used to refer to republican songs that are sung or performed with their accompanying lyrics.

The term ‘rebel music’ is also used to refer to those same songs played (but without lyrics) by parading bands.

Chapter 6 focuses on the emotional nuances and impact of rebel songs and the embodiment of emotion in commemoration parades. The role of emotion is investigated through rebel music performances and it is questioned as to how this process assists in the maintenance of the creation of community. Finally, the concept of memory in the republican narratives in rebel songs and the influence of memory on younger generations of republicans are examined.

In Chapter 7, the use of historical narrative in the context of commemorations is explored, especially the concept of memory as it is employed in political rituals such as commemorations. Using the examples of the Seamus Woods commemoration and the Bloody Sunday marches, the degrees of meaning and contestation in republicanism and in political commemorative practices are teased apart.

In the conclusion, Chapter 8 summarizes the elements described above and links them together to describe how republican identities are created and informed. There are some concluding reflections on the nature of this research and the future of republican parading bands.

Notes

1. See <http://sinnfeinrepyouth.blogspot.co.uk/2008/08/gra-shinn-fin-proudly-lead-derry.html> [accessed 10 March 2018].
2. The Troubles in Northern Ireland began in 1969. A state of ceasefire was declared in 1994, and although most academic research refers to the post-Good Friday Agreement as the post-conflict era, there are still outbreaks of violence and tension (particularly during the Orange marching season). In June 2011, East Belfast witnessed ‘the most serious [trouble] in the area for a decade’ (*BBC News*). Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-13854027> [accessed 22 June 2011].
3. This statement was drawn from an interview with a member of Ógra Shinn Féin, 23 September 2007.
4. There are a few exceptions, see for instance Boyle (2002); De Rosa (1998); Feldman (1991); Jarman (1999a); Jarman and Bryan (1998, 2000a); Kelly (2000).
5. Because ‘the North’ is a common way of referring to Northern Ireland among my research participants, I have also chosen to use the term throughout this book to maintain continuity.
6. Seamus Heaney’s 1975 poem describes the peculiar Northern Irish social habit of Burton’s (1978: 37) ‘telling’: [The famous] Northern reticence, the tight gag of place / And time: yes, yes. Of the ‘wee six’ I sing / Where to be saved you only must save face / And whatever you say, say nothing.
7. In my earlier experience of playing in a band, ‘clean’ is a term that is applied to describe how evenly (or not) a drummer strikes the drumhead and how much control s/he has over the sticks. The term also means synchronization when playing alongside or with other musicians. For example, when playing with five or six other drummers, the drumming should sound as if it is coming from one drum. ‘Dirty’ is used to describe playing

that is out of sync, out of tempo or otherwise sloppy. These terms do not exist in republican bands, nor do they overtly distinguish levels of technical skill.

8. For another example of the changing researcher-informant relationship and pregnancy in the field, see Oboler (1986).
9. There is one band I know of that does not allow women to become members. Speculation from other bands was that female membership would necessitate a name change. However, this band was particularly elusive and unwilling to meet me for further discussion on the issue.
10. See <https://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml> [accessed 10 September 2011].
11. For an important account of dangerous fieldwork in Belfast and the importance of honesty, see Sluka (2007b). See also Feldman (1991).