

**Print Media in a post-conflictual society:
A discourse analysis of the development in Northern
Ireland**

by

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1.0 Introduction

There are a lot of studies on the workings of the media and their position in society. Rightfully so, they perform a vital function in modern societies around the world, as well as being vital in building up and maintain those societies. In the US this is recognized, and they are referred to as “the fourth estate”. This is a reference to the government structure there, and colloquially the media is seen as the fourth branch of this government, tasked with being a watch dog. Without them the idea and implementation of the nation state as a project is unthinkable. They tie countries, communities, and society together through the spread of information. With such a broad use for society and with the huge power they wield, they are often misused by other powers seeking their own agendas. The media do not need these boogymen to do wrong either. There are large incentives for them to side with the powerful, or economic incentives to push stories that are hurtful for society in the long run. We know that they do play a part in several civil wars, in building up tension, in dehumanizing the ‘other’. But can we see them act altruistic in a time of peace where society and that peace is fragile? This is the question I aim to answer in this thesis.

To do so, I have decided to look to Northern Ireland. A region of the United Kingdom on the island of Ireland. Sharing a land-border with the Republic of Ireland, and being part of the United Kingdom. It is a region that for four decades was embroiled in a civil war known as the Troubles. This all ended in 1998 when the Good Friday Agreement was signed in Belfast. Since then Northern Ireland has worked hard to develop as a prosperous country still as a part of Great Britain. As a part of Great Britain it is a region that may have been underdeveloped during the Troubles, but as they were still a part of the United Kingdom and geographically close to Britain, their media sphere is well developed, and its position in society is great. In this paper I aim to look closer at two cases in modern Northern Irish history and how the media decided to treat them. The reopening of Stormont in 2007, and a more recent example with the youth riots of 2021. These two cases represent two very different cases. The Stormont reopening was seen as peace finally landing, a great coming together for Northern Ireland. The youth riots, however, were the result of frustrations running deep in part of the population and ending in riots that lasted for over a week. They were seen as the culmination of tensions building over time between the old sides of the conflict. The political parties in the region dealt out blame to the other side, and thing in general were bleak. The unrest started waning with the death of Prince Phillip as those protesting, the loyalists, wanted time to mourn his loss. The aim of this thesis is to analyze these two cases using discourse analysis as

the method to see how the media relates to differing internal conflicts in society that has experienced civil war.

1.1 Problem Statement

Throughout the development of studies on the media, there has always been a focus on the media's impact on society, and vice-versa. As an actor in society it has both influence over the governing bodies as it acts as a "fourth estate", and over the social as a relay for information as well as an actor in the social. The power relations described do not only flow from the media into these two different spheres of society, but is reciprocal in its nature, as we must understand that the interaction between media, society and government as a constant negotiation over the social and political. These interactions are not of course pure in their nature, as external forces and (political) intent sway these interactions. What interests me in relation to the media's influence on society is how forces external to the media influence their positioning in a post-conflictual situation.

The first external force to reckon with here is the fact that media has owners. The owners or founders of these media institutions will often have a certain political view, or social position in society which will affect the development of that media organisation, and position it within society. This is of course not always evident in its production as those working in larger media organizations have differing views, which presents themselves throughout its publications. The second external force, which interests me more as it relates to my project, is how media organizations are run. With this I am referring to Nicholas Garnham's (2006) article looking at the industrialization of the media, and Dallas W. Smythe's (2006) article with a similar topic looking at the audience as a commodity. These two articles are trying to explain how media is reliant on mass consumption to survive as organizations in what was the 1980s, when these two papers were written. Garnham's article shows how the media at the time of him writing his article were in a constant search for capital; this was achieved through looking to advertising. Smythe notices this trend and looks at what place advertising has in relation to the consumer. These articles still present interesting themes today, at least with the new mediascape we today live in. The media, or at least the print media, has many challenges as it loses parts of its consumer base to other types of media (online and TV). There is also the

fact that most media organizations are owned by larger transnational organizations. These ownership models further emphasize the focus on capital gain rather than local interest.

The problem I want to look closer at is the dilemma the print media faces in Northern Ireland. As media organizations live off of a broad consumer base, how do they act in a post conflictual society? Will they alter their behavior to help reintegrate society, or will the pressure for capital gain force them to continue to highlight cases that are sensitive, but might bring a high consumer base. The play between these two forces will be my focus.

1.2 Hypothesis & Research Objectives

The research objective of this thesis is to *understand the way print media portrays events in a post-conflictual society. Specifically, events where the two former parts of the conflict are involved. In this case, how this plays out in Northern Ireland. By focusing on this, I aim to understand how the print media as an actor affects the reintegration process of a post-conflictual society.* To do this I chose to look at one event that can be described as positive and one that is negative. They are spaced apart in time to look at a potential development in the media and how they operate. I have a couple of hypotheses, on the way print media operates in post-conflictual societies such as Northern Ireland. *First*, I expect the larger publication to focus on broader political aspects of the events in question, while the smaller publications who find themselves closer to the events, focus to a larger degree on societal and cultural aspects of the events. *Second*, I expect to see a larger focus on social reintegration in the smaller publications than in the larger ones. As they have a vested interest as immediate participants in that society, larger care is expected to be seen in cases that are sensitive for the future of their society.

2.0 Methodology

This thesis will be conducted by completing a discourse analysis of two cases. This methodology belongs to the qualitative school of methodology (Bryman, 2012, pp. 528-540). I am undertaking this study to understand how a free media operates in a post-conflictual society. For this study I will be looking to Northern Ireland. This is a society that was embroiled in internal conflict from approximately 1969 until 1998, a period known as the

Troubles. With the Good Friday Agreement, peace was established in Northern Ireland (Fitzduff & O'Hagan, 2009). Great Britain, which Northern Ireland is a part of, has freedom of the press which means that independent media can operate as it likes within certain perimeters. I have decided to look at two cases that involve both parts from the civil war. The first is a case that easily can be promoted to cause conflict, while the second case I am analyzing is positive in nature. The cases in question are the “youth riots” of 2021 and the “Stormont reopening” of 2007. By employing discourse analysis to these cases I aim to recognize how newspapers write about and treat cases that might heighten tensions between the two parts of the civil war, the republicans and the unionists. To analyze these two cases I am collecting data from four newspapers, two regional newspapers and two national newspapers. The regional newspapers are two popular newspapers in Northern Ireland called The Belfast Telegraph and The Irish News. The national papers I have collected data from are The Guardian and The Irish Times. Choosing to study these newspapers was done on the practical basis that I had access to articles in the timeframe and that the newspapers were popular newspapers. The timeframe I am collecting publications from, differ between the two cases because of how they played out. The Stormont reopening is an event that was planned, the newspapers knew of it, and are therefore able to write about it beforehand. I am collecting data from two weeks before the event and one week afterwards. The second case, the youth riots are not planned, and therefore does not have as much written about them beforehand. I am collecting data from one week before the riots break out and the following two weeks. Before presenting in detail how I have gone about collecting data, I will first present discourse analysis and what it entails to employ it as a method while researching.

2.1 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is particularly well situated as a method to examine how newspapers cover potentially problematic subjects and how they write about those subjects. At its core is the practice of studying language and the way it is used. The method stems originally from the linguistic field and has over time become popular among social scientists. Rather than a specific method, it is rather an umbrella term for many slightly differing approaches to a study of society through the study of language or text. Some variations of discourse study focus to a larger degree on the interpretation of language, harking back to its origins, while other

methods focus on what is conveyed in those texts and how it affects society (Dunn & Neumann, 2016). It rests on the understanding that language is social, meaning that the way people speaking follow patterns and structures that are a result of their interaction with others, their social life, as well as their social background (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). This all builds on the main foundation of discourse analysis that is a social constructionist world view. That the social world is constructed between those who participate in it. It is the understanding that we do not objectively experience the world, but that there is a layer of interpretation and categorization applied to what we experience. The way we interpret the world around us is contingent on how society around us understand and interprets the world. Meaning is created by people and societies and is referred to as representations (Dunn & Neumann, 2016). Although a constructionist world view understands that what we experience is socially constructed, this does not mean that there are not things that are physically there, they do exist, but only gain meaning through discourse (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 9). It is through the use of language that we can create meaning. Meaning and representations are then reinforced through social interactions that allow us to make sense of the world we inhabit and act upon it. This does not mean that meaning is static. Since language is socially contingent, it is relational and open-ended and therefore in constant development and change. Discourses rarely exist without challenge and there are often competing discourses both shaping society and influencing each other. Lastly, there is an aspect of power connected to this. To be able to steer discourse and naturalize understandings into 'truths' is an important facet of discourses (Dunn & Neumann, 2016). When discussing the development of society, it is important to remember that those who participate in that society are cognizant actors. This does not mean that everyone in a society actively cares about the prevalent discourses, nor does it mean that no one cares about this. There are always actors wanting to steer discourses in their favor, whatever that favor might be. It can be related to politics, community, or religious influence.

The object of discourse analysis is not to study language or the text itself. It is rather to use it as a vehicle to understand central conceptions and 'truths' in the community or society we want to study. The execution of discourse analysis comes with a lot of direction, as well as encouraging researchers to add to these directions. I am referring to the package deal that comes with discourse analysis. As described above, deciding to apply discourse analysis means accepting some philosophical and theoretical implications of the method. Most impactfully, it is the social constructionist world view which in regard to discourse analysis

carries with it premises. That the knowledge we have should be treated gently. We are fundamentally historically and culturally bound in our views and understanding, or knowledge, about the world. Our understanding of the world can and will change over time as knowledge develops in and through social interaction. This all means that our knowledge of the world is a product of our categorization and representation of it. (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). This can, and has been criticized, as it leaves itself open to the critic that if reality is constructed then we can not really learn anything since everything changes in social life. Most social constructionist accept that some aspects of social life are in principle flexible, but in reality there are many parts that change so slowly they seem constant. This is a stand I concur with as social life is incredibly different from society to society, but some parts of social life do seem to carry between most societies. The package mentioned above often differs as researchers are encouraged to supplement the ontological understanding of the world that comes with applying discourse analysis with theory they see as relevant for their research.

2.2 Positioning and Access

As I am employing a qualitative research method it is important to situate myself in regard to the subject I am studying, which are select newspapers in the UK and Ireland. The question of access was purely one of access to archives and such, as I know the language well and worked up a cultural competence as I studied the subject. Before starting to research this subject, I did not have any extensive knowledge of Northern Ireland, or the Troubles. I knew about enough about them and British society to posit my research question. In doing qualitative research it is important to build up a certain degree of cultural competence on the society you wish to look closer at, this is to be able to pick up on variations in the language or when intertextual references are used (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 84). I did this by reading the newspapers “The Belfast Telegraph, The Guardian, and The Irish Times, books such as “Nord-Irland: historien om konflikten: 1916-2016” by Øyvind Revheim (2016), the “The Northern Ireland Troubles: INCORE background paper” on the Troubles by Mari Fitzduff and Liam O’Hagan (2009) and other scientific texts on the subject. Doing this I worked up the cultural competence to pick up on intertextual references and such while analyzing the texts I collected later. But this does mean that I probably did not pick up on all references made as I

am still a complete outsider who has not visited the country. A positive aspect of this is that it could make it easier for me to pick up on some cultural traits that may seem natural to a native, what Dunn and Neumann calls being “home blind” Dunn and Neumann (2016).

2.3 Collection of empirical data

To answer my research question, I had to collect data from newspapers in Great Britain and Ireland. To supplement this collection, I have also found reports on the media in Great Britain. As I am employing discourse analysis the aim is not to challenge what the data I am collecting says, but rather gather enough data to get an understanding of what discourses are present and be able to understand what they build upon (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 29). As stated in the introduction to this chapter, I have decided to collect data from two cases in Northern Ireland, and two analyze these cases I am collecting publications from four newspapers over a three-week period around the cases. The collection process consisted of me gaining access to articles, converting them to PDF files and downloading them to summarize and analyze after the collection process was complete. The articles I collected were both news articles and opinion pieces. There were also a handful of letters and editorials in the collection.

In regard to the Stormont reopening, I have collected cases from two weeks before the reopening and one week after it opened. This was done as the assumption I had was that the media would build up towards the case, but that it would move swiftly on to the next interesting thing it appeared. The youth riots were not an event that was expected, as such there was no reason to look at newspaper cases about the rioting two weeks before it happened. Therefore, I looked at the week before the rioting, and the following two weeks. During my collection period I realized that the character of the case chosen affected how the papers wrote about cases. The “young riots” of 2021 were written about for a longer period, while the Stormont reopening fit the collection period much better.

The collection of the newspapers articles was done online. I decided to collect data from four newspapers, the two biggest regional newspapers in Northern Ireland, The Belfast Telegraph and The Irish News. To supplement these, I collected newspaper publications from two big national publications, The Guardian and The Irish Times. The reason for collecting from these

newspapers was twofold. Availability online was a limitation of this project and therefore a perimeter I had to follow. The second reason was to diversify my findings between the larger national publications and the popular regional news publications. This was also because of Northern Ireland's special geographic positioning. They are situated on the Island of Ireland but are a part of the United Kingdom. As the Troubles showed, the population of Northern Ireland is split between identifying as Catholic and Protestant, or Irish and British. Lastly I have collected reports on the mediascape in Northern Ireland. They were found under the search for a national news database, a search that turned out not to be fruitful. It seems there are several private institutions that have deals with different newspaper companies spreading the newspaper archives out between different databases. This combined with hefty fees to get access made using these databases untenable. They also did not have any of the relevant newspapers in their archives, making it even less interesting to explore those databases.

As this last part alluded to, collecting newspaper articles turned out to be a difficult process, especially with the Stormont reopening, which I will come back to. The challenge when collecting newspaper articles lay in difference of treating archives by the individual newspapers. Some had complete archives, some had no archives, and some had archives with specific dates that limited the archive. For example, The Guardian's archive ends in 2003, 4 years before one of my cases, the reopening of Stormont. But it turned out that The Guardian's website still had news articles and opinion pieces on the reopening making it possible to collect data, but these articles are not a complete collection of the Guardian's coverage of the Stormont reopening, but still gives an insight to their type of coverage. To find these articles I had to use Google and search The Guardian's website for specific terms. Which were, "Stormont", "Northern Ireland" plus the specific timeframe. The Irish Times had a much better archive, although behind a paywall, and could be searched by choosing a range of dates and it would quickly show both the printed papers and the online section. As I was only privy to the online sections of the other newspapers, I choose to use the online section of the newspaper. The local papers were more straight forward, The Belfast Telegraph had a complete online archive with open access, but their opinion pieces were behind a paywall. The Irish News had no ordered archive but stored older articles on their website making it easy to access the youth riots of 2021, but harder to find articles on the reopening of Stormont. The Irish News also had a paywall that activated after you had read a certain number of articles on their website. The general terms used to find data on these news platforms were "Stormont", "Northern Ireland", and "Riots". If I could search a range of

dates, this was the preferred method as it would not leave out any articles that simply were not tagged correctly or had headlines that featured other words than those above, or the headline did not immediately show that it was relevant. When searching using date ranges, I opened all articles that seemed to be relevant and read the first few lines as to look for relevancy to the subject.

Originally I had also decided to collect articles from the BBC, as they are popular in Northern Ireland (OFCOM, 2020). But they have purged their earlier online archive. This meant that I was only able to find four articles on the Stormont reopening, leading me to abandon the effort to include them as that amount of articles would not give an impression of their publishing at the time that would be correct. Although I had to give up in the search for an online BBC archive with a relevant timeframe, it did give me an insight in the development of online newspapers. As the web now is over thirty years old, the accessibility to earlier content seems to be in a bind where copyright, server costs and interest play against one another, leaving more and more news archives to disappear, either entirely from the internet, or they are incorporated into databases behind expensive paywalls. The exception seems to be newspapers that have both the funds and the control of their content to themselves create online archives, as seen in the newspapers I chose when collecting data.

2.4.1 The Youth Riots

The youth riots took place at the start of April 2021 and broke out over the Easter weekend. They lasted for a two-week period and manifested all around Northern Ireland. The places that saw most unrest was Belfast and Derry (Devane, 2021). In Belfast, the rioting centered around Newtownabbey, Springfield Road and Shankill Road, and Tiger's Bay. The riots were originally seen in loyalist areas but spread to republican areas as the unrest continued. This was right after a couple of events took place. These are seen as contributing factors to the unrest. The first and most cited was the decision by the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) not to prosecute any of the Sinn Fein politicians who participating in the Bobby Storey funeral during lockdown. Sinn Fein is an Irish political party with a branch in Northern Ireland. It is the biggest republican party in Northern Ireland. Republican in this setting means they represent Northern Irish citizens who seek a united Ireland. Their constituents are often

Catholic as well. The loyalists, their opposites want to remain in the union with the United Kingdom and are often Protestants. Bobby Storey for whom the funeral was held, was an important republican figure in Northern Ireland and had been one of the leaders of the IRA in the 90s (The Irish Times, 2021a). When he died in 2020 a large public funeral was arranged. The funeral was attended by up towards 2000 people, among them were 24 politicians from Sinn Fein (Press Association, 2021). This all happened during lockdown under the Covid-19 pandemic. This was all a clear violation of the lockdown rules, but because the police had been involved in the planning of the event, and the unclear rules on the lockdown led to the decision by the PPS to not prosecute (The Irish Times, 2021a). This decision not to prosecute was a clear violation of the ideas of the lockdown, even though they were not sufficiently broken to suffice prosecution.

The second event that is cited as having a direct impact on the rioting, was a drug seizure by police in Newtownabbey on the outskirts of Belfast. The police raid was aimed at a loyalist paramilitary group called South East Antrim Ulster Defense Alliance (UDA). This was claimed by the newspapers, the politicians and police as one of the reasons for unrest in particular areas of Northern Ireland (Black, 2021b). Throughout the coverage it is claimed that the youths rioting are being orchestrated by criminal gangs such as the one mentioned here. This narrative, however disappears when an umbrella organization for loyalist paramilitary groups, the Loyalist Communities Council (LCC), denies any involvement in the rioting that has occurred the last ten days. The police states immediately after this that there has been no orchestration of the youths (Ward & Black, 2021b). This event, and the one above are both involved in reinforcing the idea that there is one rule for republicans and another for loyalists, leading to further tensions.

The last expressed reason for the youth riots is the Northern Ireland protocol. This is a protocol that states that there will be a check on goods being transported over the Irish Sea from Britain. This was a compromise reached between the European Union and the United Kingdom when they decided to complete a hard Brexit. This meant that a border was to be erected between the EU and the UK. In Northern Ireland that meant a border was originally meant to be built between them and the Republic of Ireland. As the Good Friday Agreement states that there should be no borders between the two, the UK and EU negotiated a sea border in the Irish Sea (O'Carroll & Carroll, 2021). This was seen by loyalists in Northern Ireland as a betrayal by the government in London as they had promised that no border would come up because of Brexit. This raised tensions in loyalist communities as they saw this as

just another step away from the UK and towards a united Ireland. Because of all of the above mentioned reasons, protest and rioting broke out in Northern Ireland. They started to cease with the death of Prince Phillip as loyalists asked for protests to be postponed so they could mourn his passing.

2.4.2 Stormont reopening

The Stormont reopening of the Northern Ireland Assembly was opened on the 10th of May in 2007. It reopened as the result of the St. Andrews agreement that was agreed in the fall of 2006. After that initial agreement on the devolution of powers to Northern Ireland, negotiations followed until the 26th of March, the date set for getting the deal done (Moriarty, 2007a). The agreement was centered around three elements, Sinn Fein accepting the PSNI (Police Service Northern Ireland) and their charge. The reopening of the Northern Ireland Assembly, and a commitment from Sinn Fein's political opponents Democratic Union Party for power sharing in the Northern Ireland Executive. A sub-committee in the Northern Ireland Assembly. In the spring of 2007 Northern Ireland held an election which established an administration that took power on the 10th of May. This event was seen as a major development on the road towards creating a peaceful Northern Ireland.

2.5 The Newspapers

To study the way newspapers operate in a post-conflictual society in situations where they can play on that particular history, I have chosen to look at four newspapers. These were chosen for several reasons. The first thing I looked at was the local newspapers in Northern Ireland, as the conflict in Northern Ireland had been between the loyalists and the republicans, I wanted two newspapers who could be said to adhere to either side in the conflict. They also had to be popular newspapers. The other perimeter I had was that they had an online archive of sorts, so that I could collect data to analyze. These three things played out in varying degree while choosing newspapers. I ended choosing to look closer at the Belfast Telegraph, The Irish News, The Guardian, and The Irish Times.

I chose to look at the Belfast Telegraph as it was the most popular newspaper from, and in Northern Ireland. It also had a full archive on its website making data collection possible. The Belfast Telegraph is read by daily by 10% of the population of Northern Ireland, the most read newspaper (OFCOM, 2020). The newspaper started publishing in 1870 (Little, 2020). The other local newspaper I chose to collect data from was The Irish News. They were picked as it seemed to have a full, but unsorted archive. This turned out not to be the case for their coverage of the 2007 Stormont reopening. The newspaper is regarded as the Belfast Telegraph's main rival in Northern Ireland. The paper first appeared in 1891 and was established by Charles Stewart Powell a renowned Irish nationalist (The Irish News).

The two national newspapers I chose to collect data from is The Guardian and The Irish Times. The Irish Times were chosen as the Irish counterparts of The Guardian. They had a full and ordered archive, which was behind a small paywall. The newspaper was established in 1859. Their counterparts in Britain, as chosen by me is The Guardian. It was established in 1821, following the Peterloo Massacre, wanting to promote liberal interests in the aftermath of the disaster (The Guardian, n.d.).

3.0 Theory Chapter

As I chose to employ discourse analysis as my methodology it directly influences the choices I can make regarding my theoretical approach. This is part of the earlier mentioned 'package deal' that comes with choosing discourse analysis. The package deal that is referred to here is a description Whinter Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) uses to describe the implications of applying discourse analysis. In this book they point out that using discourse analysis as a method also steers some of the theoretical choices the researcher can make. The example used by them, and which has an important implication for theoretical applications, is the understanding of how the social world exists and functions.

By using this method, you accept the ideas that society is shaped by those participating in it. Otherwise, the study of the implications of language and text on society would have no meaning. As the analysis of discourse is presupposed on the understanding that discourse has an effect on the world we exist in. This refers to the fact that the material world around us gets its meaning and values from the society that exists in those environments. This is known as a

social constructionist world view (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 2). This understanding of society also says something about the development and change in society. Discourse, which I am analyzing, never exists alone. There are competing views of the world around us simply by the fact that there exists more than one of us. Meaning that no one has the exact same experiences to draw on, and therefore, everyone has slightly differing categorizations, representations, and meanings to draw upon in their interaction with others. On a larger scale, discourses compete in societies, or struggle against one another, constantly evolving societies' discourses (Dunn & Neumann, 2016).

3.1 Audience as Commodity

Media that operates in liberal democracies operate and depend on the sales and consumption of their publications and product. Historically, newspapers relied on the sale of their newspaper in stores and on the street and more importantly on subscriptions. Over time, and primarily in the last twenty or so years, this business model has been alleviated by the sales of advertising space in their publications. The development of advertising as the most important economic factor for news gained traction with cable news in the 1980s and was reinforced with the internet development around the 2000s. The internet was introduced in 1989 but did not realize its potential for the newspaper industry before 2000. It was at this point that they started realizing the potential of advertising on publishing online. Newspapers started being open for consumption, and revenue turned from subscriptions towards advertising. This meant that you as a journalist, or as an editor, are not only selling a product (a newspaper), but you are also selling a predicted number of readers. You sell to those who consume, and you sell to the marketing business. This means that the number of readers become more important, at least for papers who base their economic model on advertisements. This has led to a mass media that in many places has become more sensationalist, or at least takes greater care to appeal to a greater audience. Another effect this has had is that the media has changed its focus. As Gadi Wolfsfeld (2001) points out, a famous saying in the publishing business is: "If it bleeds, it leads". Not every newspaper focuses solely on sensationalism, but because of the general turn in mass media, there has been a general change in publishing culture, where sensationalist reporting has gotten a larger role in the media. This is not necessarily a

conscious change within publishing, but reflects the norms that govern journalists in a said society (Wolfsfeld, 2001, p. 15). As the culture, media finds itself in will reflect that culture.

These facets of the mass media must be regarded when trying to understand why I ask my question in regards to the behaviour of the print media in a post conflictual society. This is with a free media in regard. There are plenty of examples of the media being used by the political powers in place to further their specific goals. Where the media's involvement has led to acts of atrociousness. Such as the genocide in Rwanda, where the radio was actively used to rile up parts of the population before it started. It has also been shown that the conflict in the Balkans was fuelled by the media (Golcevski et al., 2013). What I am more interested in is how a media-scape that is well developed and free react to a post-conflict society.

I have therefore looked closer at Northern Ireland. This is a society that was embroiled in conflict from the late 1960s until 1998 when the Good Friday Agreement was signed on the 22 of May. The agreement did not end the conflict altogether but was clear statement from the involved parties that the path towards peace had officially begun. The conflict was fuelled by several factors, constitutional, religious, and historical. Starting with the last one, historically the conflict between the two sides in the conflict stems from the 17th century. The English, with a protestant King invaded the catholic Ireland in 1688. At this point there had already been a stream of English settlers in the area since the late 12th century (Fitzduff & O'Hagan, 2009). In 1921, Ireland proclaimed itself independent from Great Britain and Northern Ireland followed suit. The difference between the north and the south however was their religious affiliations. While the south was predominantly Catholic, the north was by 2/3 majority Protestant. This led to an era of systemic discrimination towards the Catholic part of the population in the north. As the civil rights movement swept across the USA, and the student rebellions started up, the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland started to rebel against the majority. What is commonly seen as the tipping point of the conflict was when a catholic single mother was snubbed of housing due to a protestant couple in 1969, this led to protest and "The Troubles". Even though the conflict can be seen as the struggle for equal opportunity, I must also mention the constitutional angle of the conflict. Even though a conflict between Catholics and Protestants sounds clearer as a conflict, there are also subgroups. Here there are many stances, the larger ones are the Ulster Unionists who wish a tight bond to the United Kingdom. Their direct opposites are the Irish Nationalists, who wish for a united Ireland. You also have subgroups on both sides who are content with independence, and rather seek an affiliation to the one of the sides (Fitzduff & O'Hagan,

2009). In regards to religion, enough has been said on that part, there is the historical conations, and these dividing lines are still used today, as a part of expressing ones belonging in the conflict, and post conflict.

To discuss the above-described project, I have used three distinct concepts, firstly I have used Dallas W. Smythe's (2006) concept of audience commodity to understand the way modern print media may function in regards to its consumers. Then I have used Todd Gitlin (2003) and Gadi Wolfsfeld (2001) and their respective understanding of media framing to further explore the way media portrays the world. Lastly I have employed Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" (2016) and his understanding of how groups and communities work as a tool to recognize the dynamics in play between the unionists and republicans in Northern Ireland. Anderson also focuses on the media's role in the creating and maintaining of "imagined communities." These theoretical tools that I am employing all fall along the line of the social constructionist world view as they place the social has in creating meaning and representations.

Dallas W. Smythe article "On the Audience Commodity and its Work" (2006) focuses on the way of gaining revenue in mass media. Smythe states in this article that he is not interested in the effects of media, as has been, and today still is the focus of research on the media. He is interested in the realities of the media. That is the economic base on which the industry functions. As he states: "*Because audience power is produced, sold purchased and consumed, it commands a price and is a commodity*" (2006, p. 187). The fact he raises here is something that should not be ignored when studying the mass media and its role in society. One has to acknowledge the fact that the media does have an interest in how many consume their product. He further equates the consumption of media with work, and places it in a capitalist setting, using the very fact of how capitalist systems work to argue for his position, as stated above. This understanding of the media's position in regards to the public and its consumers gives an understanding to the dilemma the media faces in a post-conflict society. We cannot only accept that the media wishes to convey information, educate the public and act as a watchdog, they have agency. I do not envy their role as both a promised watchdog for the public while still having to focus on broad readership and general consumption of their product among the public. Although this theory does give us an understanding of the media's position, it also paints a rather bleak picture of the media, and its intentions. This is probably because of Smythe's position as he puts this into a Marxist framing, and argues against the capitalist system. This argument although functioning within a Marxist framing requires all

journalists and editors to be aware of the consumers as a product, a stance most editors and journalists would agree with. For example, in Sandra D. Melone, Georgios Terzis, and Ozsel Bebeli's article (2002) on how the media should act in a conflict transformation situation, rather shows how journalists can positively influence a society through their publishing, also providing guidance on what journalistic measures one should follow in such situations. Smythe does not comment on the effects of the media, as he states in his introduction. When considering his statements on the audience as commodity, we must also remember how agency of the individuals within media organizations, as it is they who actually produce.

3.2 Framing

When considering the media in of itself, we have to look at how they produce content, and in what way they are influenced when doing so. Above I have explored how the media is pressured by economic concerns when producing content, and how a shift in economic revenue focus has led to a new understanding of their audience, and their relation to them. It is not only an idealistic role as the "fifth estate", but rather their more realistic position of balancing broad readership appeal and thorough work as a watchdog of society. This is something which Gadi Wolfsfeld (2001) explores in his article: "The News Media and Peace Processes: the Middle East and Northern Ireland". Here he discusses the effect of the environment that the media exists in effect how they produce content. In the first part of the article he looks at how a divided political elite effects the freedom of expression in the news, and how this affected the peace talks in the Oslo Agreement, to the negative. He also uses the "The Good Friday Agreement" as an example and sees the political elite in that context as more supportive of an agreement, therefore not hindering the media as in the previous example. He then goes on to discuss the fact that the environment that the media exist in affects what it produces. In academic terms, he discusses how media is framed. The first part of this framing is the fact that the media in question has to regard in what economic position it finds itself in. Journalists and editors has to take into account who owns their company, not in any extreme sense, but it is something to regard (Wolfsfeld, 2001, p. 15).

They also have to contend with how the politicians act and express themselves. This is about them being in a dialectic relationship with the politicians. The politicians express themselves

publicly through the media, which then reacts to this and surveys the reaction among the people and produce counter pieces to the politicians opinion. This leads back to the politicians who continue the circle, refining their opinions. What this shows is that the relation between journalists and the politicians must be taken into account when looking at how the media acts. Furthermore they are also interacting with other newspapers. If some of the newspapers express large levels of sensationalism, this is something that other media must take into consideration. Their reaction to this is often to follow the sensationalist news media, further towards their production, as this often leads to wide readership, and therefore higher revenues in regards to advertisements. Something the other news media must consider in the economic situation most media today find themselves within (Wolfsfeld, 2001).

Another framing that must be considered is the fact that when media reports on a case, they inevitably affect what they are reporting on. Todd Gitlin wrote very well on this effect in his book: “The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left” (2003). In this book, he discusses the how the student rebellion in the USA ended up being defined by the media. Through the news media’s early coverage of the movement, they’re reporting, which he describes throughout the book as being dominated by stereotypes, ended up defining the movement. The reasoning behind this is simply the way information travels. As this movement was growing, information gotten through the media about the movement lead to people joining in, and adopting the traits described by the media as defining the group. This of course goes on to discuss various aspects of this, but his reasoning is sound. As media conveys the news, they also convey information, ending up affecting the group or movement they are reporting on. This has of course changed a bit with the introduction of the internet, but the principle remains. This further implements another layer of dialectics to the context of understanding the media’s role in society, and highlights the importance of the media in a post conflict society.

The weakness of only looking at how the media frames lies in the fact that this only points out that the media is affected by the society it exists in. Saying that media is affected by the society it exists in, is in of itself quite evident and doesn’t really bring anything new to the table. What must do, is to rather understand this in comparison to how the groups within society exist. This is something that Fredrik Barth does well. By using Barth’s theory on boundaries, I make it possible to identify where and when the media is taking a stance, and or side in a case. Theories considering the media, often look to the ownership models in place, and in what way political pressure affects their reporting.

3.3 Groups and boundaries

Benedict Anderson looks at how these groups define themselves. He focuses mainly on the nation-state, how it historically grew forth, how it is maintained and how it continues to thrive. Anderson describes a nation as an imagined political community. He emphasises that all nations are imagined as no member of a nation can know of, or meet every other member in their nation, still they imagine a fellowship with these unknown others. These unknown others are seen as comrades, no matter the social hierarchy, inequality, nor exploitation that may exist in this imagined community. Anderson is careful not to load the description of imagined communities as a negative. He refers to Gellner who has proposed similar ideas of invented nations, but who looks at this invention more negatively. Anderson focuses on how they are imagined, not how real or genuine they are (Anderson, 2016, pp. 14-15). In his book on the subject Anderson describes how nation-states started appearing as the religious domination of Europe started to wane. He describes how the advent of printing kickstarted this decline. Without describing this entire process, with the growth of the printing industry Europe changed. From printing books in Latin to the clergy, to producing books in spoken languages to the large masses. The standardization of languages that came from this production strengthened regional belonging, started creating larger imagined communities, as well as weakening the church (Anderson, 2016). The processes that strengthen these imagined communities are what primarily interest me in this setting as they show how group belonging is created, maintained and strengthened. Benedict Anderson is not the first or only writer to see that groups have a tendency to define themselves by imagined traits or through opposition towards 'others.' This seen in the writings of anthropologist Fredrik Barth who focused on ethnic groups in his famous writings on the subject (Barth, 1969). His focus was on the individuals moving between ethnic groups, and what that could say about groups and their boundaries. As with Anderson there is an understanding that maintenance of boundaries sustain groups.

4.0 Findings

To best present the two cases I have decided to present them after one another to give a clear overview of what the newspapers focus on in their coverage. I will start with the case of the youth riots as this represents the relatively present writings of the newspapers. My starting point are the local papers, I will then go on to present the nationwide. Then repeat the process with the case of the Stormont reopening. After presenting my findings on each case I will go on to look at the discourses highlighted by the papers in their coverage of those cases.

4.1 Youth riots

The youth riots were a period of unrest that started in the first days of April 2021. There were rioting in loyalist areas throughout Northern Ireland. The rioting began in the aftermath of a decision by the prosecutor's office in Northern Ireland not to prosecute republican, and for the most part Sinn Fein politicians, who participated and planned a large public funeral for Bobby Storey. He was a known and prominent Sinn Fein politician. The unrest was not only a result of this decision but has been recognized as the tipping point among loyalists. There was already dismay at Northern Ireland's position post Brexit with a sea border established between Britain and Northern Ireland. As well as this there was a lockdown in Northern Ireland because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The unrest seemed to wane as Prince Phillip died and loyalists called for postponement of protests as they mourned his passing.

4.1.1 Local Papers

The local newspapers I decided to look closer at for this thesis were the Irish News and the Belfast Telegraph. Both newspapers have their main offices in Belfast and are regarded as the two largest regional papers in Northern Ireland.

The Irish News had a total of 47 articles on the subject between the first of April and the fourteenth of April. The articles were found by searching the Irish News website, locating the correct date range, and flipping through the pages with headlines and accessing those that

seemed to be relevant to the rioting and general unrest. To supplement this process I used google to search for articles on riot from the Irish News across the timeframe. In the timeframe chosen there were most articles published in the timeframe from the fifth of April through the ninth of April with only two articles published on the subject before those dates. After the end of the chosen timeframe of the fourteenth of April there were still a fare number of articles being produced, but the numbers were about one a day, where some of them were opinion pieces. It being clear that the news coverage had moved on to other things.

The Belfast Telegraph published at least 60 articles on the youth riots between the first of April and the fourteenth of April. As well as publishing several more articles after this timeframe. To collect articles from the youth riot I accessed their excellent archive section where I could access any day I wished to look closer at, and then go through the published material from those dates. To double check that I had found every relevant article I repeated the google search mentioned in the previous paragraph. The publishing pattern on the youth riots where different from the Irish News. The Belfast Telegraph had two spikes in publishing, between the fourth of April and the tenth, and another smaller surge between the thirteenth and the fifteenth of April, where the first wave were publications regarding the current rioting, while the later publications comment on the rioting and political reactions.

The two local newspapers have several commonalities in the way they have covered the youth riots. This is to be expected at they both find themselves in the same journalistic environment, both in a Northern Irish context, but also, and perhaps more influentially, in a western journalistic tradition. What immediately struck me was the structure of the articles produced by the papers. The articles often reported on an event and combined that with gauging the reaction of political leadership to the event in question. In this case, the nightly disturbances and rioting. This is seen in the aftermath of a bus hijacked and set fire to on Wednesday the seventh of April. There are several articles on the event in both newspapers, as expected as this was understood as a more serious action than what the rioters had done earlier. This was not the only act of disorder in Belfast that evening, as Lanark Way saw several hundred protesters gather, and a photojournalist was attacked (Halliday, 2021; Ward, 2021). This night seems to have been the boiling point of the conflict as the protest did not grow this large again and started too vain away. In the Belfast Telegraph they present Prime Minister Boris Johnson's reaction to the unrest in "Johnson condemns violence in Northern Ireland after another night of unrest" (Ward, 2021). The article quotes a total of eight officials throughout. To emphasis what these officials have said, their original tweets are also included in between

the text. The Irish News also uses pictures of tweets in between the text, but to a lesser extent. Although this article stands out as particularly full of quotes, it represents a pattern in many of the published articles reacting to events unfolding in Northern Ireland. The typical pattern seen in the articles are that they start with a paragraph on the subject of the article, then it draws in quotes from officials, in the case studied here the political leadership comes forward with statements for the press to quote. These quotes often end up making up the rest of the articles with the journalist giving some context. This tendency to use quotes to a larger degree is seen in all types of articles. The Irish News for example, published the article “Man (47) charged after rioting in Newtownabbey as north sees worst widespread violence in years” (Simpson, 2021a), where the article starts by focusing on arrests made in the aftermath of the rioting. It goes on to quote nine people, starting by quoting PSNI Chief Superintendent Davy Beck who urges for a stop to the violence, and then goes on to quote eight political figures either condemning the violence and/or handing out blame for the unrest. These figures include First Minister Arlene Foster, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis, but also local politicians such as SDLP South Belfast MP Claire Hanna. As a counterweight to the widespread use of quotes from leaders in the community, there are very few interviews with people affected by the unrest and rioting, nor any interviews with anyone participating in the riots. I could only find one interview in an article in the Belfast Telegraph, where the locals wanted to stay anonymous when interviewed on the situation unfolding in their community. This could be an explanation as to why there are so few interviews relating to this case. As the friction between the two sides are ongoing, the communities where this is happening do not want to invite violence into their neighborhood or directly against those being interviewed.

Another trend seen in the articles on the unrest is a section explaining the reasons for the rioting. Many of the articles published during the unrest had a small paragraph somewhere in the text where they presented the reasons why there were rioting. In the Irish News, articles often ended with this explanation, while the Belfast Telegraph had less of a pattern of where the explanation was found in the text. What stood out is that the explanation stayed the same from the very first days of the rioting throughout the period. In the article “NI political leaders call for calm as 15 PSNI officers injured in Belfast rioting” (Morris & Rutherford, 2021) published on the third of April, the explanation seen throughout the unrest is presented. The reasons for the unrest are the decision not to prosecute the politicians that participated in the Bobby Storey funeral during lockdown, and the Northern Ireland Protocol in the Brexit agreement. One more reason is added to the list the next day on the fourth of April. A drug

seizure in Antrim from a UDA branch (loyalist paramilitary group) has caused anger among loyalists there. These claims are echoed in the Irish News on the third of April in the article “27 police officers injured in Northern Ireland unrest” (Divane, 2021). Here the explanation presented are the post Brexit trading arrangements, meaning the Northern Ireland Protocol mentioned above, and the decision not to prosecute the Sinn Fein politicians involved in the Bobby Storey funeral during lockdown. A couple of days later, on the fifth of April, the Irish News also mention the drug seizure as a reason for the unrest. These explanations stayed the same throughout the rioting and were mentioned in most of the articles on the subject.

The last point I would like to highlight regarding the structure of the local reporting during the youth riots is the counting of police injuries during the youth riots. Throughout the reporting on the unrest in Northern Ireland, the articles covering the unrest would include police injuries. This does make sense as it would be numbers provided by the police and they would update the press whenever there had been new injuries. One of the first articles published in The Irish News on the unrest was titled “27 police officers injured...”(Divane, 2021).

Although this was not a theme seen in the headlines given in the news coverage, it was again used on the ninth of April with “19 police officers and a police dog injured in last night’s violence” (Black, 2021c). Especially in The Irish News there would be a short mention of the total amount of injuries to police officers in any article on the subject. The Belfast Telegraph also included the amount injured in many of their articles, but only in there do we see any reports of what kind of injuries are sustained by the police. These were burns, and impact injuries to heads and legs (Morris & Rutherford, 2021). In contrast to the constant update on police injuries, little is mentioned about injuries to those participating in the unrest. The explanation for this can be that those involved do not want themselves exposed by talking to the press. The only information published by the newspapers on those rioting is the age and gender of those arrested. Whatever the reasoning behind this focus by the newspapers this is something to consider as it seems to be a conscious choice by the papers, if it is not, that posits different questions. I will come back to this in the chapter analyzing the discourse.

4.1.2 National Newspapers

The two national newspapers I have chosen to look closer at is The Guardian and The Irish Times. The Guardian describes themselves as “a global news organization”(The Guardian,

n.d.) with head offices in London, as well as in the USA and in Australia. The Irish Times has their head offices in Dublin.

The Guardian has an archive, but this does not extend beyond 2003 and is therefore irrelevant for my purposes as I am looking at cases from 2007 and 2021. What they do have is an unsorted archive, meaning that the articles are online but there is not a search engine or a page on their website to search for these articles. The solution to this was to use google to search for articles. By searching specifically on The Guardian's website and using search term "Northern Ireland" I ended collecting 39 articles related to the youth riots. From the third of April there is continuous coverage of the unrest in Northern Ireland with at least a couple of articles per day. There was a significant increase in articles on the eighth of April with eight articles on the subject. The following days publishing of articles on Northern Ireland fell to three to five articles a day until the twelfth of April. After this the publication of articles on the unrest became more sporadic.

The Irish Times was the easiest newspaper to collect data from, although it was behind a reasonable paywall. This meant I had to pay a normal subscription fee to get access to the online archive on the Irish Times website. They had a complete and ordered archive for both their printed editions and the online section of the newspaper. As I had to collect data from the other newspapers online, I continued to focus on the online publications. This meant that I could collect all articles published by setting a date range and going through everything published. They published 57 articles within the date range. Interestingly they published several articles that discussed issues raised by the rioting in the week leading up to the breakout of unrest. The spread of their publishing on the rioting was to a larger degree stable with two to five articles published daily from the first of April, although one can argue that pieces commenting on the development of tension in Northern Ireland start on the twenty sixth of March. As seen with the other papers there was a spike on the eighth and ninth of April, The Irish Times published twelve articles on the youth riots those days. The twelfth of April is the last day with consecutive publishing on the youth riots.

The structure of the articles in The Guardian and The Irish Times share many of the characteristics seen in the articles in The Belfast Telegraph and The Irish News. The likeness in structure between the newspapers are enhanced with their use of the Press Association, or as they are now called The PA Group. Several of the articles describing the news development on the youth riots in Northern Ireland are written by them and published in all of the newspapers I am analyzing. In the national newspapers they are used in the start of

the coverage and are used as additional reporting in later stories. There is still a heavy reliance on the use of quotes from officials regarding the newsworthy event written about. The quotes are mostly from political leadership and civic society leadership positions. The latter are heard from when their position makes it relevant for the newspaper article, while leading politicians are heard from in a broader specter of cases. In cases where a person is both a political figure and holds an important position in civic society you see them quoted often. This is the case with Arlene Foster and Michelle O'Neill, they hold the First Minister and Deputy First Minister positions on Stormont as well as belonging to the two largest political parties in Northern Ireland, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Fein respectively. They are quoted in most of the newspaper articles concerning the youth riots. In between the quotes there are paragraphs giving context. Often descriptions of the rioting and the amount of injured police, as described in the section on the national papers.

In the national newspapers reporting on the youth riots there are often sections explaining why there is tension, as seen in the regional newspapers. The national newspapers focus on the three explanations seen in the regional newspapers, the Bobby Storey funeral during lockdown and the decision not to prosecute any of the Sinn Fein politicians participating in it (Blackall, 2021; The Irish Times, 2021a). Then there is the aftermath of Brexit, the Northern Ireland protocol that sets up a border on goods crossing the Irish Sea from Britain (Blackall, 2021). Lastly there is the seizure of drugs in County Antrim from a loyalist paramilitary group in that area (Carroll, 2021c). In addition to these three main explanations for the unrest there is to a lesser degree an accusation that the rhetoric used by unionists has stoked the tensions in Northern Ireland (McClements, 2021b; O'Carroll, 2021). I will go further into explaining these causes for the unrest when discussing the discourses seen in the newspapers. All these explanations appear early in the writing on the rioting and stay mostly the same throughout the timeframe I am analyzing, with an exception with the case of the drug seizure. There is however a difference in their focus. Most continue to be mentioned in the sections of the articles on why there is rioting, but the papers show differing interest in the explanations. In The Guardian there is early on an interview with the EU ambassador to the UK who comments on the Northern Ireland protocol (O'Carroll & Carroll, 2021). The ambassador comments that the Northern Ireland protocol is the best solution because of the decision by the British government to complete a hard Brexit. He urges the unionist to work to make the protocol function as well as possible, while promising that the EU will be accommodating. This interview shows the general leanings in The Guardian regarding this case where they

focus on British politics and their influence and fault in the unrest in Northern Ireland. This is further highlighted in an editorial in the newspaper where they lay much of the blame on Boris Johnson and Brexit, but the above mentioned causes for the unrest are all mentioned (The Guardian, 2021). In The Irish Times there is a focus on the unrest being multifaceted as in seen in their editorial on the unrest. Here they visit all three explanations, but also focus on the general development in Northern Ireland and criticize the lack of investment in those communities. As well as laying blame on politicians from both sides of the spectrum for the tension in Northern Ireland (The Irish Times, 2021b).

In the regional newspapers there were almost no interviews or quotes from residents or protesters in their coverage of the unrest. The national newspapers do marginally better in this regard with both newspapers publishing one or two articles each interviewing people in the area. The articles published with interviews were, *Few rioting youths understand NI protocol, but fear filters down* by Luke Butterly (2021) in The Irish Times and *Northern Ireland clashes reflect loyalists' fear of marginalisation* and *'The fear is that this will get bigger' six nights of rioting in Northern Ireland* both by Rory Carroll (2021b, 2021c) in The Guardian. They give an interesting insight into how the locals view the situation. Here current politics are not as prevalent in their subjects' minds as it is in publishing, rather the focus of those interviewed is on the communities being left behind and a feeling among the loyalists that they are being treated as second class citizens. There are more quotes from the loyalist community, but the nationalists that are quoted focus on loyalists not being used to not getting their way. A difference we do see in the coverage between the regional newspapers and the national newspapers is the amount of opinion pieces that are published on the topic. The Irish Times published ten opinion pieces on the rioting and general situation in Northern Ireland. While The Guardian published six opinion pieces. Both papers also have some letters from the public they publish in addition, with it being more common in The Irish Times. There are three reasons that immediately spring to mind as to why we see more opinion pieces in these newspapers in comparison with the regional papers. It can be a question of economics, the national newspapers have a bigger capacity to publish opinion pieces, the second reason which directly correlates to the first reason, is that because they have a bigger economic flexibility they have a larger amount of writers sending in their opinion pieces. This can also relate to the circulation of papers, making writers to larger degree aware of the national newspapers than the regional newspapers. The last reason that springs to mind is that the audience reading about the unrest in national newspapers have a larger need of explanation on

the unrest that regional readers, therefor leading to the national newspapers publishing more pieces discussing the causes for unrest.

I have not presented the structure of the articles as a critique of the journalistic work done by the newspapers and journalists there, as I would not be qualified to do so, nor do I think they have done a particularly bad job. What I would rather focus on is how this formatting affects the discourses emerging and maintained. The immediate reaction is that the number of quotes afforded to political figures let political interests take the front seat and be reinforced. At the same time, it is the newspapers who decides who gets quoted in their articles, at least to some degree. An important factor is that by being First Minister, Arlene Foster (DUP) has been elected by the population of Northern Ireland to a position of power, and as such is heard more often than local MPs, and her commenting on most cases is appropriate, the same goes for the deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill (Sinn Fein). In reality, these are equal positions of power. They were created as equal positions but are named differently, there is a movement towards changing the name of the positions to "joint" First Ministers. We see that they both feature often in the coverage of Northern Ireland. In addition to the political leadership, we hear from the police who updates the press on the rioting. What has surprised me is the lack of locals being quoted in the coverage and this seems to have affected the discourse seen in the coverage of the youth riots. From the articles on the rioting we know that there were a lot of spectators to the unrest as described in Rory Carroll's (2021b) piece: *'The fear is that this will get bigger' six nights of rioting in Northern Ireland* where there is clearly a lot of spectators waiting for the unrest to start. The Guardian mentions in this and other articles the use of social media to plan the protests, making it easy for everyone to know where the next protest and possibly riot will occur. Meaning the amount of possible interview subjects should be easy to find, both participants, locals, and spectators.

4.2 The discourses of the youth riots

In the coverage of the youth riots in Northern Ireland we are presented with several discourses. To go back to the definition of discourse, it is a set of interrelated texts that is produced and presented to an audience (Bryman, 2012, p. 536). These texts present an understanding of the world and that their understanding explains the situation they find

themselves in or explaining. The “truth” in these world views is not something we are especially interested insofar as they appear to be the “truth” to those who present these views. What we are interested in are the fundamental ideas they build upon and the role of newspapers in the spread of the discourses presented that rest upon those fundamental ideas.

There were three discourses that were presented during the youth riots. Presenting these discourses are three actors. The two main actors are the loyalist and unionist politicians, and their opposite part in the nationalists. The discourses are led for the loyalist and unionist by the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and for the nationalists by Sinn Fein. The third actor creating discourse are the papers themselves. They introduce a discourse incorporating some of the reasoning from both of the other actors in addition to incorporate their own discourse on the rioting.

The unionist and loyalist discourse on the rioting has two main events that are used to underline their arguments. These are two recent developments in Northern Ireland. The first development is the Northern Ireland protocol, and the second is the decision by the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) to not prosecute any of the nationalist politicians that attended the mass public funeral for Bobby Storey in 2020 during lockdown.

4.2.1 Loyalist Discourses

The first narrative I will present that is trying to explain why there is rioting across Northern Ireland is the Bobby Storey funeral. The riots broke out the weekend after the PPS decided not to prosecute, and where all the newspapers covering the breakout of violence in Northern Ireland has a paragraph explaining reasons why there is unrest, this is included as a reason. All the newspapers I have looked at mention the decision not to prosecute the politicians in attendance at the funeral (Beesley, 2021; Blackall, 2021; Devane & PA, 2021; Morris & Rutherford, 2021). As well as being presented as a reason for the rioting in these articles there are also article prior to the rioting showing the tension that has come with the decision not to prosecute. The parties on Stormont go as far as censuring Sinn Fein as a reaction to the decision to not prosecute by PPS (Carroll, 2021d; Leebody, 2021; McClements, 2021a; The Irish News, 2021a).

Bobby Storey was a leading republican figure, who earlier had been the head of intelligence for the IRA in the 90s. In 2020 he died and a public funeral was arranged to remember him (Kelpie, 2021). At this funeral, a crowd of 2000 people showed up. Among these were 24 Sinn Fein politicians including deputy First Minister Michelle O’Neill. The trouble with this mass gathering was that it happened during lockdown, making the event illegal. This led the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) to investigate. They recommended prosecuting some of the politicians participating when they handed their investigation over to the PPS. They, on the other hand, concluded that because the police had been involved in the planning of the funeral and with the unclear laws of the lockdown to not prosecute any of the participating Sinn Fein politicians. Although there was not a clear legal basis for prosecution, as The Irish Times (2021a) states: “*A flagrant and egregious breach of spirit.*” There is an understanding that although there was no legal action taken against the participants, this was a breach of the lockdown. The discourse enforced on the back of this decision was that there is one rule for Sinn Fein and one for everyone else. This is narrative that First Minister Arlene Foster of the DUP, her party, and the other unionist politicians have heavily leaned into. To express and reinforce this discourse they demand the resignation of Chief Constable of the PSNI Simon Byrne (Black & PA, 2021). Stating that they had lost confidence in the police on the back of the Bobby Storey case. This is a demand that is continuously put forward in the press until the eight and ninth of April, depending on the newspaper. It culminates with First Minister Arlene Foster not wanting to meet with the Chief Constable. The demands for his resignation end with the visit of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis and Stormont putting out a joint statement condemning the violence seen across Northern Ireland (Hutton et al., 2021).

The second discourse that is promoted by the loyalist and unionist politicians in the newspaper regards the aftermath of Brexit. With the United Kingdom (UK) withdrawing from the European Union (EU) there had to be borders established between the two parts. This is especially problematic for Northern Ireland as they are located on the island of Ireland and therefore must have a border between themselves and the Republic of Ireland. What makes this problematic is that the Good Friday Agreement rests on several foundation, one which states that there will be no borders between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This was no problem when both were part of the European Union, but with the decision by the United Kingdom to leave the EU this became a problem. The solution that was reached by the UK and the EU was that there would be a border in the Irish Sea. This meant that goods

crossing the straits between the UK and Northern Ireland would be checked, while no borders between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland would be erected (O'Carroll & Carroll, 2021; The Irish Times, 2021b).

What made this even more problematic initially was that the biggest unionist party in Northern Ireland, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), backed the conservative government in London in their process of completing a hard Brexit. Meaning the UK would leave the EU without agreeing to new trade deals before exiting the union. The DUP were promised by Prime Minister Boris Johnson that there would be no borders in Northern Ireland, something he had to backtrack on (The Guardian, 2021). With the establishing of a border the loyalist community in Northern Ireland felt that this was another move towards a united Ireland, and resistance towards the protocol started growing. The DUP saw this development and joined in on the resistance, launching a legal suit against the protocol.

These two discourses, the “two tier policing” exemplified by the Bobby Storey funeral affair, and the erection of a border in the Irish Sea, has been the main focuses of loyalist quotes in the newspapers regarding the youth riots. The two are closely linked but focus on different aspects. The ideas are that loyalist and unionists are becoming second class citizens and are being left behind by the rest of the United Kingdom. That they are become second class citizens relate to the way they perceive that policing is done, where they are judged on a different standard than republicans. We see this idea be presented in all the newspapers I have analyzed. In *Despair fuels the flames of young loyalist anger in Northern Ireland* by Rory Carroll (2021a) in The Guardian, there is an interview with a young loyalist who has participated in the riots that says: “*You have police treating Protestants like shit and Catholics like upper-class citizens. The police were born Protestant and should remain protestant.*” This echoes the political messages that are often quoted in the newspapers I have looked at where the message from DUP leader Arlene Foster is that loyalist trust in policing is at a low and they are calling for the Chief Constable’s resignation (Young, 2021).

The second idea that is being presented by loyalist and unionist is that they did not get a good deal when the Good Friday Agreement was signed. There is a feeling that since the signing Northern Ireland has over time gotten closer and closer to Ireland. An example of this that slightly predates the youth riots was the case of the UK government ordered that the union jack was to fly over all government buildings in England, Scotland, and Wales, with Northern Ireland not included (Moriarty, 2021). This was viewed by loyalists as one of many small signs that they are drifting away from the United Kingdom. When the UK decided to leave the

EU after the 2016 referendum the DUP backed this decision with promises that there would be not borders erected. When this turned out not to be true, the loyalist communities in Northern Ireland reacted with anger (Wheeler & Doherty, 2021).

4.2.2 Republican discourse

In response to these discourses, the nationalists and republicans in Northern Ireland has focused on the rhetoric used by loyalists and unionists. As the youth rioting started the leadership in Sinn Fein apologized for their appearances at the Bobby Storey funeral. Sinn Fein were also censured by the Assembly which had been recalled to discuss the decision by the PPS not to prosecute any Sinn Fein politician involved in the funeral. This was a purely symbolic gesture and held no practical implications, but showed the atmosphere of Northern Irish politics at the breakout of the riots (McClements, 2021a). With the rioting starting Sinn Fein's involvement in the Bobby Storey funeral became the automatic explanation for unionist politicians looking to explain the cause of the rioting. Sinn Fein reacted to these accusations by focusing on how unionist political rhetoric had led to the tension in Northern Ireland. In The Irish Times article *Foster urges end to loyalist violence in Belfast and Derry* by Arthur Beesley (2021) we see this play out as First Minister Arlene Foster expresses her loss of confidence in Chief Constable Simon Byrne as well as her understanding for the frustration in the loyalist communities. This message is repeated in most newspaper articles quoting loyalist politicians. The response from Sinn Fein MLA Gerry Kelly also sets a precedence for republican responses to the unrest. That it is a direct consequence of political rhetoric used by unionist politicians, especially DUP. Their continuing undermining of the PSNI and the criminal justice system has led to low confidence in loyalist communities, which they argue then has lowered the bar for violence.

The discourses presented above may give the impression that unionists and loyalists are a minority in Northern Ireland which they are not. They have made out the majority of the population since its inception in 1921 (Fitzduff & O'Hagan, 2009, p. 3). Although it today is a more equal demographic in Northern Ireland with 45 percent of the population identifying as Catholic and 48 percent as Protestant or other Christian denominations, the unionists have historically held much of the power in Northern Ireland (Department of Finance and

Personnel, 2012). Experiencing this shift in demographics over a relatively short timeframe is something that can leave the impression that they are losing their link to the United Kingdom or heritage, as the Irish heritage and link becomes perceivably stronger. This seems to be a discourse the DUP and other unionist parties are happy to use in their rhetoric and it is commented upon by republican politicians. This is seen in one of the few articles interviewing a youth involved in the conflict. *“Bob was adamant: loyalists had become second-class citizens.”* (Carroll, 2021a) He goes on to explain this by showing how the police treat the Protestants worse than the Catholics. In the same article, we hear from an older Catholic council worker who responds to these claims *“Unionists and loyalists were used to getting their way – and now that they’re not getting their way they’re complaining like a spoilt child.”* (Carroll, 2021a). The attitudes shown here are ones that are seen in the political sphere as well, the loyalist politicians play on the rhetoric that everyone should be equal in front of the law, hinting that this is perhaps not the case now. The response from the republican side is that their rhetoric is what is wrong, and not anything in society.

4.2.3 Alternative discourses

With the argument against the Northern Ireland protocol there was another discourse that mainly appeared in the newspapers with The Guardian leading the narrative. This was the argument that what was happening in Northern Ireland now was an expected result of Brexit. The discourse held is that during the debate around Brexit there were already people warning that Northern Ireland would be put in a tough spot because of their geographic position. This was mostly ignored, and the DUP publicly supported the conservative governments wish to withdraw from the EU. With their support they were promised that no borders would be set up, even though this was a must if Brexit were to happen. This discourse is closely tied to Boris Johnson and his leadership which The Guardian is highly critical of (The Guardian, 2021).

The last discourse that is presented in the newspapers is that the violence that is seen in Northern Ireland is not the result of just anger among the populace, rather that it is also orchestrated. On the first of April, The Belfast Telegraph published *Claims UDA is ‘uniting Ireland’ with Dublin drugs trade* by Gillian Anderson (2021). In this article the focus is on

Ulster Defense Organization (UDA), a loyalist paramilitary group, who are suspected of transporting drugs from Dublin and selling them in Northern Ireland. In this article the focus is on the PSNI and the communities' confidence in them, but as the riots start, they keep being mentioned. Most articles reporting on the rioting and unrest in Northern Ireland has a section explaining why there is tension. The two first things mentioned is the Bobby Storey funeral and the decision to not prosecute, the second reason is the border in the Irish Sea, and the third reason mentioned is the seizure of drugs from the UDA in County Antrim. The explanation is that this drug seizure has led to anger in the loyalist community the police raided (McClements, 2021c). This is expanded upon through the development of the rioting. The police start this discourse by stating that the violence seen in Northern Ireland is orchestrated (Morris & Rutherford, 2021). Politicians adopt this as part of their explanation and often mention it when they are quoted on the violence seen. This discourse dies away immediately when the Loyalist Communities Council (LCC), an umbrella organization for loyalist paramilitaries, gave their first statement since the riots started. In this statement they denied any involvement in any of the riots seen. This was immediately adopted by the police, who changed their opinion on the riots being orchestrated (The Irish News, 2021b). With this we also see the politicians putting out statements

4.3 Stormont reopening

The Stormont reopening was an event that took place on the 8th of May 2007. It was the result of several years of political workshopping and negotiations between the two former enemies in the DUP and Sinn Fein, and their political partners. It started with the agreement of the devolution of power to Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive was to lead Northern Ireland in most affairs, as seen in Scotland. It would have a joint office in all but name, the First and deputy First Minister. These positions would be held by the two largest political parties, which thus far has been unionist and republican parties. To get to the point of reopening Stormont, there were negotiations on the workings of the assembly until the deadline, the 26th of March. As they agreed on the deadline, Rev Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness were to share office and appoint 11 ministers to the executive at Stormont. For reference, Stormont is the name of the building where the Assembly sits.

4.3.1 Local Papers

When researching and collecting data from the two local newspapers, the Belfast Telegraph and the Irish News I discovered that the Irish News had no articles from that time period. As such, I could only collect data from the Belfast Telegraph on the reopening. They on the other hand, had a complete archive of news published in the three-week period I collected news from. This was from the 21st of April through the 15th of May. I decided to focus on the build up to the reopening Stormont in the collection of data. This was because the reopening was a much awaited event, with foreign dignitaries attending to celebrate this development. The articles collected from Belfast Telegraph number 48. They consist of news, opinion pieces, and editorials.

The news articles collected varied much more in length than seen in the collection of local newspapers in the modern case. Articles published are often just made up of a couple of paragraphs on the subject in focus. Such as the election of new speaker in the Assembly. Willie Hay of the DUP is elected as the new speaker on the 8th of May and this is given an article by the Belfast Telegraph who write four sentences on the matter. They state that he is elected, who the deputy speaker is, and who is likely to hold the position in the future (Belfast Telegraph, 2007a). The news articles that are covered in this period does not have close to the amount of quotes seen in the newer case. This can be seen in the cases covering the day of the reopening of Stormont, the 8th of May. The articles published on the day are of the longer variety. There are descriptions of the event, and a few quotes on the event. Another trait of the news coverage of this event, is the use of opinion pieces. There are quite a few opinion pieces and editorials on the reopening of Stormont. These have, for the most part, a positive outlook on the reopening and future of Northern Ireland. There is room for dissidents to this view, and we there are some opinion pieces with a negative tilt. As with the *Mean-spirited duopoly brooks no resistance* by Professor of Politics Henry Patterson (2007). Here he rails against the worship of leaders in Northern politics and presents a different image of the two First and deputy First Ministers. This is also seen in the news section of the newspaper as staunch opponents of the agreement state their opposition. There are not many articles on this, but a grant to support gay rights creates debate among Christians and is presented as a negative aspect of the reopening of Stormont (Gordon & Henry, 2007).

4.3.2 National Papers

The national newspapers I collected data from was The Guardian and The Irish Times. I was able to find articles on the reopening of Stormont from both newspapers. The Guardian who has articles online from that era, do not have these in a ordered fashion or with a way to search for them on their website. The solution to this was to use google as a search engine to search The Guardian's website. This was done by searching the term "Stormont" and the term "Northern Ireland" and applying the relevant date range to the search. By doing this I was able to locate 16 articles on the subject. I suspect that these were not all the cases written on the subject by The Guardian, but that this is what remains online. The first being published on the 23rd of April, and the last coming out on the 13th of May. The rate of publishing was about one to two a day from the 2nd of May through the 13th. The Guardian's publishing on this case consists of news and opinion pieces, as well as a timeline of the Troubles, and a historical piece on Boris Yeltsin's influence on the current development.

The Irish Times has a full ordered and searchable archive on their website. You need a subscription to access it, but with that you have full access to all their published material. The only thing that seems to have disappeared with time is the authors of some of those pieces. There were very many articles where no author was given credit. In the timeframe set for the collection of data in regard to the reopening of Stormont, The Irish Times published 54 articles on the matter. After going through the articles, it is clear that some of them only have a tangential connection to the reopening of Stormont. This is because Ireland was waiting for the Taoiseach to call the next election, and during the end of the period collected from, the campaign for the election. Even though this was the case, most of the 54 articles published were mostly about the development in Northern Ireland. As the Irish Time published a high number of articles on the subject it is clear that there is a cluster of publications on the dates immediately surrounding the 8th of May, the day of the reopening. The articles published were news, opinion pieces, and as a standout, a list of all the fallen during the Troubles and up until 2007.

Regarding structure of the articles in the national newspapers, we see the same tendency as in the local newspapers. The news articles can be shorter than their modern equivalents, although the pieces in The Irish Times tend to be long pieces. Where the modern news articles are filled with quotes to create lengthy articles, this is not a format followed by The Irish

Times or The Guardian in their coverage of the reopening. The articles are longer interviews with people in power. Or they take time to give context to the news reported and as such, end up being longer in nature. The trend with publishing a higher number of opinion pieces seems to be the reason there is a high quantity published on the reopening.

4.4 Hegemonic Discourse and the Stormont reopening

In this part I will not follow the structure of the presentation of the discourses surrounding the youth riots. In that case there were several discourses struggling for dominance, and a political environment competing to be heard. In the case of the Stormont reopening there is clearly a dominant, or hegemonic discourse being presented. Where there is often an environment in politics where there is a struggle for your discourse to get greater acceptance and it being reproduced (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 58). In this case, the struggle has momentarily produced one hegemonic discourse. One that focuses on the reopening of Stormont that a sign that peace is finally here.

The focus on this as the defining moment of peace is reinforced by the idea that the Good Friday Agreement and the progress made from there onwards has been plagued by start and stop politics as presented in the article announcing the signing of the new deal in Stormont in the Belfast Telegraph, *Signing off* (McAdam, 2007). The discourse that is promoted in all the newspapers on the reopening of Stormont, focus on several things. The first being the above-mentioned period of politicking since the signing of the initial peace agreement. With this in mind, there is an agreement among those covering this event that it is “...*unthinkable even a few years ago*” (Belfast Telegraph, 2007b). In The Irish Times this is also evident in their coverage of the meeting between Ian Paisley, Martin McGuinness and the European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso. Throughout the article there is a focus on the fact that this is happening. The article, *Joviality marks historic meeting* (Moriarty, 2007b), the reporter repeatedly comes back to the fact that there is good tone between Paisley and McGuinness, and that it does not seem to be only for the cameras, as he states: “*However, there appeared to be nothing sham about the – thus far – practical working relationship the two politicians have struck up together.*” This type of reflection is something the reporter seems to contemplate throughout the article. The focus of the historic nature of this event is something that is also played up. As mentioned in the paragraphs on the structure of the

articles seen in this case, there is a lot of opinion pieces. These share the general tone that this is a historic moment, and that this is a hard fought victory. This can be seen with the titles given to the opinion pieces, with titles such as *Moment of history*, *The sunrise of this morning*, and *Musket in hand, Paisley buries the hatchet with Ahern*. There are of course some dissenting discourses that try to challenge the dominating discourse. This is seen best in the Belfast Telegraph where the opposition to the funding of a gay parade is discussed over several articles. It starts as a small article on a clergyman calling out DUP Mr. Poots to remove this funding and he refuses politely. This is heightened when the funding in the new governing body is much higher than earlier. This discourse is led by a clergyman that is explicitly against the Belfast agreement and current development (Gordon & Henry, 2007). But the remarkable thing to take away from the discourse presented by the newspapers in regard to this reopening is the clear cohesion in its message.

5.0 Analyzing Discourses

In the last chapter I highlighted the discourses that were presented in the newspapers by applying discourse analysis as method. By investigating the different representations, I identified the nodal points of the discourses present. Nodal points being the dominating representations in discourses (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 117). In the case of the youth riots, there were several discourses present struggling to be the hegemonic understanding of the happenings in Northern Ireland at the time. The loyalist politicians were the loudest voice with plenty of subjects to lay the blame on. Mainly the poorly handled repercussions of the mass republican funeral during lockdown. The republicans on the other hand, had a smaller arsenal of topics to employ, so they focused on the loyalist discourse itself and how its rhetoric had led to the violence seen. In the case of the Stormont reopening there was a completely different discourse climate, as it was dominated by one discourse, one that looked forward to the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive getting new devolved powers and what that might lead to.

In this chapter I am going to analyze the discourses that appeared in the newspapers and draw upon the theories I presented earlier and employ them as tools to understand my findings. The audience as a commodity, framing and its effects, as well as Anderson's imagined

communities. By doing this I aim to understand the role of newspapers and how they act in the presence of stories that involve the two parts who earlier were involved in conflict. Do we see the newspapers engage with this history to purely create content that creates more ‘clicks’, meaning amount of people opening webpages to look at the articles published and advertised? Having a lot of ‘clicks’ is good for revenue as that generates income from advertisement. Or do we see that the newspapers take a more nuanced stance and explore different angles of these stories?

5.1 Pure commodity?

The first point that calls when trying to understand if the discourses that are presented in the newspapers are if these can be understood through the specter of publishing articles to generate revenue. There are some purely numerical arguments I can make. In the case of the youth riots the four newspapers published a large quantity of articles on the subject. In the three-week period I collected data from there was a total of 215 articles published in the four newspapers. The Belfast Telegraph had the most publications with 71 articles on the riots. This does not include articles that were published after the dates I had set as a framework. Their direct competitors in The Irish News published 47 articles in the same timeframe. The national papers published in the same region of articles with The Irish Times publishing 58 articles and The Guardian with the fewest of the bunch with 39 articles. These also include opinion pieces and letters to the editor. The period where we saw the most articles being published on the subject was after the Wednesday night when 600 protesters gathered by the peace gates at Lanark Way and a bus was hijacked and set fire to. With this the Belfast Telegraph published 20 articles in two days directly concerning the riots. The Irish News published 15, The Guardian published 11 articles, and The Irish Times also published 15.

These were all articles discussing the development seen in Northern Ireland or opinion pieces. As well as being written by journalists employed by the newspapers, there are pieces that are produced by the Press Association and published by the newspapers. There was a lot that occurred during these two days. There was the 600 people protesting in Belfast by Lanark Way, the hijacking and then burning of the bus. This led to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis to fly to Northern Ireland. His subsequent meeting with the political

leadership. The Alliance Party collected enough signatures to recall the assembly and the executive at Stormont. First Minister Arlene Foster refused to meet with Chief Constable Simon Byrne. The loyalist umbrella organization Loyalist Community Council came with its first statement regarding the unrest. In addition to all this, the White House, the Taoiseach of Ireland, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson all came with statements on the rioting and unrest. With this all happening it is understandable that there would be a larger number of articles produced in these days.

Dallas W. Smythe in his article “On the Audience commodity” (2006) argues that the product that the media sells is audience power. This does not refer to the audience in a positive light however, Smythe understands audience power as commodity that is sold and consumed. He argues that collectives of the audiences, specified through demographics, are sold and bought for their attention at predictable and specific time. He wrote this a couple of years before the advent of the smart phone, a device that has made him more relevant, although I would argue that it alters some of the aspects regarding predictable time for advertisement. Today, the predictable time is directly connected to phone use and you could argue that this has just reinforced the power of selling audiences to advertisers. Smythe’s argument goes that it is not the articles published that are the product, it is the audience. The number of articles published in these newspapers further this argument. Nobody needs twenty articles on one subject over a two-day period to be updated on the local developments. In regard to, my research question on the newspapers and their relation and behavior in these situations seem on the surface level to lean towards the classic saying, “*if it bleeds, it leads.*”

Even though there are indications that this is true, there are arguments to be made against this bleak understanding of the medias publishing. As the argument that the smart phone has enforced the idea that it is the audience that is sold, it could also be argued that the advent of the smart phone has led to a different way of consumption. There is not a hunger for long well thought and written out articles on subjects on a day-to-day basis. The media landscape has changed and what is now desirable are up to date articles that are easily consumed on the smart phone, rather than on a computer or in a physical newspaper. In this case, there would be more articles, as they are continuously updated through publishing new articles, rather than updating older articles on the subject. There is a case for this, and can be seen in the articles published, as with the article *Man (47) charged after rioting in Newtownabbey as north sees worst widespread violence in years* by Claire Simpson (2021a). This is a clear example of an article being made up of several points to have enough content for publishing. The article

starts with information on arrests, then goes on to describe rioting with quotes from the police, it goes back to the information on arrests again, then it quotes the First Minister who blames the unrest on the republicans. And the rest of the article is quotes from different police and political leaders. The article is full of a range of information that is already published in the same newspaper the same day, with the *Children as young as 12 involved in another night of violence as five police officers injured* by James Ward and Rebecca Black (2021a) but it has an update regarding the arrests and some new quotes. This was a pattern seen in the general publishing on this case. There were a lot of publications sharing the same information, but with some updates. This does two things for the newspapers. They stay relevant as consumers accessing their newspaper through differing methods get up to date articles, which they are accustomed to and want, which creates clicks for the newspapers. It also creates more articles for consumers to read giving an opportunity for even more clicks.

Comparing these finds against the Stormont reopening of 2007 gives the impression that there has been a change in the amount published. Over the three-week period in 2007 the Belfast Telegraph published 48 cases on the reopening, with several of the articles being semi-relevant. As this was a question of politics, local politics mentioned this in articles on politics, but where the reopening of Stormont was not the theme of the story. The Irish Times published 54 cases on the reopening, but here there were also cases that mostly were focused on Irish politics, and mentioned how the development in the “North” was impacting on the Irish political scene. An example of this was the speculation of when the then Taoiseach Bernie Ahern would call an election (Collins, 2007). An opinion piece that touched on the development, but which did not really have anything to say about that development in of itself. The event was of such a size that it affected much of politics on the British Isles. As stated in the methods chapter, my data on The Guardian’s publications on the reopening is most likely incomplete, but they published 18 articles on the subject, were all were concerning the reopening of Stormont. As the Stormont reopening was in 2007 there weren’t smart phones at the time, and such the argument of a constant need for updates does not hold in regard to publishing and the number of articles produced. This is seen in the articles on the reopening, they cluster around the 8th of May, which was they day of the reopening. But there is not as a big a cluster as seen during the youth riots. The Irish Times published 13 articles and opinion pieces on the 8th and the following day, the 9th. These all covered different topics related to the opening. One article lists everyone that died during the Troubles in a chronological order without comment (The Irish Times, 2007). Although the title is quite

damning *The price of peace in a divided island*. The Belfast Telegraph published 14 articles and opinion pieces, with very few articles repeating each other. The Guardian does not seem to have a spike in their coverage and publish four articles on those two days.

5.2 Discourse and framing

The publication of articles does on the surface seem to cluster around important developments and events that occur in the societies they find themselves in or are covering. But as I am not conducting a purely quantitative study, I am interested in how the newspapers covering the cases I have chosen, look at and treat them. I would argue that the content of the articles is more important than the amount of coverage when thinking about the effect newspapers have on society. Todd Gitlin's excellent book "The whole world is watching: Mass media and unmaking of the new left" (2003) takes a look at precisely this. As described in the theory chapter, Gitlin looks at how the coverage of the student movement in the USA in the 1960s was so one dimensional that it ended up framing the movement. What this meant is that the coverage ended up creating the framework for the nationwide movement through its coverage of it. The focus on the stereotypical hippie students was so complete that it ended up only attracting those who favored that way of life. Destroying the originally diverse set of people making up the movement.

We see fragments of this in the coverage of the youth riots in Northern Ireland in 2021. We have already established that there were a lot of writing and publishing during the events. As someone who had read Todd Gitlin before covering the events of the youth riots, I immediately recognized the framing described by Gitlin in the way the coverage of the movement was portrayed. The first articles on the rioting look very much like the last articles published. There are loyalist youths involved and they are throwing things, petrol bombs, masonry and/or fireworks, at the police. The reason for the rioting is the Bobby Storey funeral, the drug seizure from Ulster Defense Alliance (UDA), and the post-Brexit border established in the Irish Sea. Lastly, the articles contained quotes from politicians condemning the violence, and often a tally of the number of injured police. This seemed to be the starting point for most of the coverage of the riots, the number of police injured. As the police had daily briefings for the press or at least statements, there was a constant update on the amount

of injuries sustained to the police. These injuries are not often described in any fashion. In the articles where they are described, they are commented on as light burn injuries, or light damage to limbs (Black, 2021a). In contrast, there is never a mention of injuries to protesters. There are of course some difficulties with this, as the rioters do not seem to have any organizing body that collects this data, and so to get this information would require going to hospitals and trying to get the information there. We get a couple of hints that there are injuries to protesters, as one is described as setting himself briefly on fire, before disappearing into the rioting masses (Simpson, 2021b). As well as plastic bullets being used by the police and a water cannon deployed. This can be accepted as being a difficult task for journalists to complete, but it is a choice they are making in their publishing.

By presenting the rioting this way there are legitimate questions to ask if the coverage of the events occurring led to rioters copying what was seen at the first riots. The use of petrol bombs, the age group of those involved. There is an argument for this. Loyalist Community Council (LCC) which speaks on behalf of loyalist paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland, stated that there had been no orchestration on their part, nor their partners' part it changed an accepted narrative. Throughout the coverage of this case the police and politicians stated that they believed that the rioting was orchestrated, but with this statement they withdrew that theory soon after the LCC's statement (Morris, 2021). If there was no involvement from paramilitary groups as the LCC states, then why was there some many claims that there must be orchestration? The answer can be the newspaper coverage of the unrest. It should also be noted here that there are many videos of the rioting, both in the newspapers and in social media. This is seen in The Guardian's piece *'fear that this will get bigger'; six nights of rioting in Northern Ireland* by Rory Carroll (2021b) where it is stated that the planning of rioting is done through social media. Social Media's role in the planning and shaping of the riots should not be underestimated as its role in society is huge, but as there is only talk about its' use in the newspaper coverage and it is therefore hard to say anything concrete about it here. There is a real possibility that the media's framing of the rioting ended up shaping it. Both in regard to participants, and the way the riots played out. It is easy to wrongly conclude that newspapers perhaps should not cover stories like these. What the lesson should rather be, is that by only publishing what is stated you will end up with very similar stories on events. This is an argument for journalism. With it, you end up breaking up some of the likeness that is so easily seen in cases such as this where articles across several newspapers sound and say much of the same. When we look at the Stormont reopening this framing is not relevant in the

development over time. This has more to do with the type of event the Stormont reopening is though. There are few groups involved in the story, and those involved are political parties with set identities.

5.3 Us against them

There was a civil war in Northern Ireland from 1969 until the Belfast Agreement, better known as the Good Friday Agreement, was signed in 1998. It stemmed from the same movement that Todd Gitlin wrote about, the American student protests of the 60s. It was waged between the unionists who wanted to stay in the union with the United Kingdom and the republicans who wanted a united Ireland. The conflict was more complex than this, but there were clear demarcations between the two. It was unionist against republicans, or loyalists against nationalists, and Protestants against Catholics. Since the end of the Troubles, there has been a lot of work put into reconciling these two sides so that they can live together in Northern Ireland. This divide is as expected seen in the political arena, where the two largest parties are the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Fein. They share power in Stormont by having the two joint political leader positions, The First and Deputy First Minister positions. They shared them in 2007 when Rev Ian Paisley from the DUP shared it with Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness, and they shared it in 2021 with Arlene Foster and Michelle O'Neill. This has some interesting implications for the discourse used in the media. As I have shown in the findings chapter, there were clear demarcated lines of discourse from the two political sides during the youth riots. In the buildup to Stormont reopening there was however no such lines drawn. Not by those participating, nor by the newspapers. There you saw politicians actively putting aside differences, as seen by Paisley and McGuinness after their meeting with Mr. Brown to discuss financing support. They both came with statements afterwards where they essentially said the same, they were disappointed in the financial offer from London ("Paisley & McGuinness NI financial package 'not up to scratch'," 2007).

Benedict Anderson's imagined communities build on several things, one is the opposition to the other. This is something the newspapers build under in the development of the youth riots, while in the case of Stormont reopening, they underplay this opposition. Here we can argue that Northern Ireland are in two different states. In 2007 with the reopening of Stormont there is an atmosphere of nation-building. We see articles such as *There is no alternative* by Brian

Rowan (2007) that urges Northern Ireland to embrace this attempt at power sharing. There is the article only stating the names of the killed, the title clearly pointing to the cause of division, and then being presented without any other comment. This type of titling is common in this case, there are often titles used such as *Moment of history* and *New day dawns on the steps of Stormont* in the Belfast Telegraph, and *Grasping chance at a better future* in The Irish Times. These all build on the fact that Northern Ireland has overcome the odds and their history to create a functioning society in Northern Ireland. This language is not seen in the 2021 youth riots. Here the language and the focus has changed. The focus is on the other part and their wrongdoings. The Bobby Storey funeral is a good example. A year has gone since the funeral, and the PSNI has investigated it, they have sent their rapport to the Public Prosecution Office who has decided on the evidence that they can not, and will not prosecute anyone involved. Still it is the main political divide as the riots break out. Likewise the republicans react by blaming the tension in Northern Ireland on the unionist politicians and their rhetoric.

6.0 Conclusions

Before drawing conclusions on my findings, I would like to look back at the beginning of this thesis. It all stemmed from a lecture in the first semester at the Peace and Conflict studies. We were advised to write down possible thesis' ideas and I quite early came upon my question. Conflict sells. If it bleeds, it leads. The history of publishing in regard to civil wars is also a long one. In Rwanda the radio was used to spread hateful rhetoric in the build up to the slaughtering of thousands. The same was seen in the Balkans in the 1980s and 90s. The media can unfortunately play an important role in conflict. The question I ended up posing, was what happens in societies that have experienced civil war. Do they still follow the old saying: "*if it bleeds, it leads?*" Or do we see a change in the way the media behaves in these societies. An important aspect of this is that the media had to be relatively free to do as they please. With this caveat I could really see if there was a difference. The choice then fell on Northern Ireland. It is part of a functioning mediascape on the Isles of Britain. It is a society that experienced civil war in what they called the Troubles. Over the last 24 years they have been more or less at peace, continuously working to better their society. The question then was, what would I see when looking at them?

As with many answers in academia, it is a bit ambiguous. It is clear through the coverage of the reopening of Stormont, that it at that time was a strong hegemonic discourse which was presented through the press and their newspapers. Northern Ireland were finally at peace, they would now work together to get rid of sectarianism and racism that was still a big problem. Through this discourse though, there were publishing which rioted against the general view that everything was great. There were flaming opinion pieces on the leader-worship of the major parties and those leaders only wanting power. Still there was an impression left that there was a coming together at that time in Northern Ireland. With the next case, and 23 years removed from the Troubles, the tone is different. The focus has shifted towards blaming the counterparts. The fact that there are riots in the first place means that there are huge problems to tackle still. The political language and standoff seem to be fueled by the newspapers. They have taken a step back and let those quoted by them steer public opinion.

At last, to look back at my hypotheses, were those assumptions correct or wrong. In the case of the youth riots, we did see more political discussion in the national papers, where the regional papers had a lot of politics in them, but without much comment. There were not as expected a larger degree of focus on the societal issues connected to the case in hand. Where I saw the most comment on that was in The Irish Times who would often try and look to these to explain the riots, in addition to remarking on the normal explanations.

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