

# Sexual citizenship in Belfast, Northern Ireland

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**ABSTRACT** *In this article we examine the contours and construction of sexual citizenship in Belfast, Northern Ireland through in-depth interviews with 30 members of the GLBT community and a discursive analysis of discourses of religion and nationalism. In the first half of the article we outline how sexual citizenship was constructed in the Irish context from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, arguing that a moral conservatism developed as a result of religious reform and the interplay between Catholic and Protestant churches, and the redefining of masculinity and femininity with the rise of nationalism. In the second half of the article, we detail how the Peace Process has offered new opportunities to challenge and destabilise hegemonic discourses of sexual citizenship by transforming legislation and policing, and encouraging inward investment and gentrification.*

## Introduction

In his classic text *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950), T.H. Marshall conceived citizenship in terms of three sets of rights that define the citizen status of individuals of a State: civil/legal, political, and social:

‘Civil or legal rights are institutionalised through the law and include things such as the right to own property; freedom of speech, thought and faith; liberty of the person and the right to justice. Political rights are institutionalised in the parliamentary political system and councils of local government and include the right to vote and participate in the exercise of political power. Social rights include the right to a certain level of economic welfare and security.’ (Richardson, D. 1998, p. 84)

In recent years, citizenship has been broadly reconceived so that it is not just about rights, redistribution and tolerance but also recognition and respect: that variable citizen status, and the consequential unequal and unfair treatment in society, is not due merely to distribution of legal, political and social capital, but also of symbolic, cultural and economic capital (Isin & Wood, 1999). Citizenship, therefore, is more than legal and political membership of a State, and the entitlements and obligations individuals possess by virtue of their membership, it is also

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about the protections and respect citizens can expect or indeed purchase as a member. As Pakulski (1997, p. 80) details, this means a recognition (in theory at least) of the:

‘right to symbolic presence and visibility (vs marginalisation); the right to dignifying representation (vs stigmatisation); and the right to propagation of identity and maintenance of lifestyles (vs assimilation)’;

in other words, the right to be different (see also Bell & Binnie, 2000). It also recognises, as Evans (1993) details, that citizen status can be bought in the guise of consumer status. Isin and Wood (1999, p. 4) thus describe citizenship as ‘both a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and economic) and a bundle of rights and duties (civil, political and social) that define an individual’s membership in a polity’ (usually a nation-state). Important here is the notion of duties, in which membership rights are twinned with responsibilities, where the primary responsibility is to be a ‘good’ citizen. The notion of what constitutes a ‘good’ citizen (recognition), and who is therefore entitled to rights (sanctioning), are the issues around which citizenship is most often contested (Pakulski, 1997).

Accordingly, sexual citizenship is concerned with the defining and administering of rights (civil, political, social, cultural) dependent on an individual being a ‘good’ sexual citizen, that is, conforming to ‘appropriate’ sexual acts, behaviours and identities as defined by the State and wider society. By undertaking ‘deviant’ sexual activities, an individual potentially forfeits their status as a full citizen, and consequently some of their rights. Moreover, if the sexual activities have been deemed so inappropriate as to be criminal, individuals risk prosecution and their right to freedom. Although as Evans (1993) argues, members of the GLBT<sup>1</sup> community have managed to carve out a degree of citizen status through consumer spending power (using the so-called ‘pink’ pound, euro, dollar, etc.), given that legal rights and entitlements continue to be defined and anchored to nation-states, it is the State that primarily defines what sexual activities are ‘inappropriate’ and therefore who is and is not a ‘good’ sexual citizen. As a result, Duggan (1995) and D. Richardson (1998) see sexual citizenship as primarily constructed and policed by the State and its regulatory apparatus (e.g. political discourse, law, police, welfare system), with the State using constructions of morality to define the civil and welfare rights of its subjects based on their sexuality, offering rewards and entitlements to ‘good’ sexual subjects whilst ‘bad’ subjects are punished (see Bell, 1995).

This liberal view of sexual citizenship as a set of rights that is defined by legislation and policing, and which can be redefined through campaigning and political and social action, has been challenged recently by more radical conceptions. Radical theories of sexual citizenship note that within any liberal theory the GLBT community inevitably has to make compromises in order to become more socially acceptable (Bell & Binnie, 2000). As such, liberal models of citizenship promote reluctant tolerance within less restrictive constraints rather than welcome embrace. Further, as Carl Stychin (1998) notes, adopting a political strategy formulated in liberal terms divides the GLBT community by creating a division between ‘good gays’ (those willing to compromise) and ‘bad queers’ (those who want to be accepted on their own terms), with the latter retaining only limited citizenship. Proponents of radical theories contend that individuals will only become ‘free’

sexual citizens through a fundamental rethinking of sexuality and sexual identity, one that radically destabilises existing ideas and categories.

While we acknowledge the important challenges that theories of radical citizenship pose, in this article we are concerned with the discursive role of the State and the project of nation-building in defining and regulating sexual citizenship in Northern Ireland. In particular, we examine, using a historical and contemporary discursive analysis complemented by in-depth interviews, the role of religious and political discourses in shaping the bounds of the liberally constituted sexual citizenship operating in the jurisdiction. As we will illustrate, both wider Northern Irish society and the GLBT community in Belfast predominately frame sexual citizenship, and seek 'progress', in these terms. Northern Ireland, we contend, is an interesting arena in which to explore the construction of sexual citizenship given (1) its political history and societal divisions constructed along the lines of religious denomination and political allegiance, with the interplay between the communities tending to reproduce moral conservatism; and (2) it is at present a society undergoing transformation due to the peace process which is working to address issues of conflict and division and to envisage new forms of social relations.

The analysis presented here is one part of a project that has sought to explore heterosexism and its effects on spatial behaviour of members of the GLBT community in Belfast<sup>2</sup>. Data generation followed the same format as other parts of the project, consisting of in-depth interviews using an interview guide approach (see Kitchin & Tate, 2000). In total 30 individuals were formally interviewed: 19 individual interviews, two in pairs, one large focus groups of 12, five of whom were individually interviewed at a later date, and two of whom took part in a smaller focus group of three. Interviewees were recruited by referral through gay organisations in the city, including the Rainbow Project, Northern Ireland Gay Right's Association, Queer Space, Lesbian Line, and Gay and Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland, and personal contacts. Interviews took place between June 2000 and August 2001, lasted between three-quarters of an hour to six hours, and all were taped and transcribed in full. The interviewees were self-identified as 20 gay men, eight lesbians, one bisexual woman and one transgender (male to female). Ages varied between late-teens and early 70s, with the majority of interviewees in their 20s and 30s. Five of the respondents were parents. All except three were resident in Belfast; with one who had emigrated to the United Kingdom and was visiting home and two who lived outside of Belfast but travelled into the city regularly. Both authors were involved in the interviewing, with majority of interviews undertaken by the second author.

The remainder of the article is divided into three sections. In the first section, we trace the construction of religious discourses of sexuality in Ireland from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. In particular, we examine how the interplay between the Catholic and Protestant churches resulted in high levels of theological and social conservatism in both<sup>3</sup>, and the on-going effects of the various churches narrow definitions of 'good' sexual citizenship on members of the gay community in Belfast. In the second section, we trace the ways in which nationalist discourses worked from the late nineteenth century to promote particular kinds of heterosexual femininity and masculinity and situate the notion of a heteropatriarchal family unit as the cornerstone of society, and how these ideas are reproduced in on-going

nationalist and unionist ideology that draws from religious discourse and dominates Northern Ireland politics. In the third section, we examine the ways in which the peace process has created a milieu in which religious and nationalist discourses of sexuality are being challenged and undermined through legislative and policing reforms, and how members of the GLBT community are creating a more visible social scene.

### **Religious Discourse**

One way that sexual dissidence is constructed, by both nationalists and unionists, is through religious discourse, which as Livingstone *et al.* (1998) notes still plays an important role in shaping moral values of Northern Irish society and in the maintenance of ethnic identity. Livingstone *et al.* (1998) reports that the Continuous Household Survey 1988–1991 details that 91% of people have a church affiliation (compared with 58% elsewhere in the United Kingdom), with over half the population attending church once a week (compared with 10% elsewhere in the United Kingdom). This attendance varies with denomination with 75% of Catholics regular churchgoers compared to 30% Protestant. While Livingstone *et al.* (1998) demonstrate that the monolithising of the Catholic and Protestant communities conceals a rich variety of religious cultures in the North, sexual attitudes among churchgoers across denominations is quite consistent. In their survey of 5255 churchgoers from 81 churches (Catholic, plus 12 Protestant denominations) located in seven different areas of Belfast they found that sexual conservatism remains common. This is particularly the case for conservative Protestants and orthodox Catholics (who using their typology make up 50%, respectively, of churchgoers) who overwhelmingly believe that sex before marriage, cohabitation and homosexual practices are ‘wrong’—among Protestants 88%, 85% and 94%, respectively; among Catholic 82%, 81% and 87%, respectively. Even among more liberal churchgoers (who using their typology make up about 25% of Protestant and 14% of Catholic churchgoers), 56% of Protestants and 39% of Catholics view homosexuality as immoral. Overall then, the vast majority of regular churchgoers (who represent half the population of the city) view homosexuality as ‘wrong’. This view ties strongly to the official teachings of both churches, whose disciplining of sexuality is rooted in long standing moral conservatism.

Inglis (1987) notes that from the mid-nineteenth century onwards the Catholic Church increasingly sought to impose explicitly on sexual practices, developing a monopoly on sexual knowledge and morality through the pulpit and schooling, using discourses of sin, shame, guilt and familism as a means of disciplining, enacted through the confessional, penance, censorship and marriage. Hence, the ‘soul became constituted through a discipline of the body created and maintained by a rigorous system of examination, supervision and punishment’ (Inglis, 1987, p. 149). Inglis notes that this disciplining converted ‘ignorant savages’ and their ‘animal’ and sinful urges into moral beings, with sexual morality formulated in relation to the concept of Natural Law, based on the thirteenth-century writings of Thomas Aquinas and officially adopted by the Catholic Church in 1879 (Hug, 1999). Natural Law consists of two main precepts: ‘first, that one must do good and avoid evil; second, that it is in nature that we can find the moral values that enable

us to distinguish between good and evil' (Hug, 1999, p. 2). Here, homosexuality was deemed to be a crime against nature, an 'objective disorder'; a bodily expression of sin and evil that had to be disciplined. Given people's corruption by original sin, the Church's dogma and immutable principles provided a path to salvation.

While such discursive practices were common across Europe, there were a number of factors that made Ireland different. For example, Larkin (1984) reports that a 'devotional revolution' took place in Ireland in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Prior to the famine (1845–1849), he details that only 33% of Catholics attended Mass. By the late nineteenth century over 90% attended (a rate that persisted until the mid-1980s in the South; Inglis, 1987). Particularly important here was the appointment of Primate Paul Cullen by Rome in 1850. Advocating ultramontanist, the acceptance of the total authority of the papacy, he set about reforming Catholicism in Ireland (Bowen, 1978). This included clerical reform—the disciplining of priests themselves, a marked change in devotional practice with rural 'stations' closing and ceremonies in private settings such as the home stopped, and an increased emphasis placed on the rosary, Eucharistic adoration and pilgrimage, and a marked increase in the ratio of priests to population, growing from 1:2000 in 1850 to 1:1250 by 1870 (Larkin, 1984; Martin, 1997). Further, the Irish Catholic Church's views on sexuality were particularly puritanical, being influenced by the teachings of Cornelius Jansen, a seventeenth-century thinker from Louvain whose followers were expelled from France and took up residence in Maynooth, the primary seminary in Ireland (Martin, 1997). Jansen saw the human mind as essentially corrupt and in need of strong moral policing. In this vision, sex of any kind (including lustful thoughts) was sinful, unless for procreation, and required penance. Given the strong links between State and Church in Ireland, with the church running schools and social welfare, Catholic civilising of the body was state-sponsored. As a consequence, 'secular civility became synonymous with Catholic morality' (Inglis, 1987, p. 165). This situation was mirrored in a slightly different fashion in Northern Ireland, with the Catholic Church acting as a shadow state for a Catholic community lacking political power. Here, the Catholic Church provided first and second level education, welfare through its voluntary organisations, and leisure-time pursuits through its network of parochial halls and social clubs.

As Daly (1997) and Hug (1999) note, the views of the Protestant church in Ireland on matters such as divorce, abortion and homosexuality are virtually identical to the Catholic Church, borne out of the same social puritanism. In Belfast, this is particularly the case, given its large Presbyterian population<sup>4</sup>. Presbyterianism is part of the wider Reformed tradition derived from the teachings of Jean Calvin (Brooke, 1994; Erskine, 1998). Central to Calvin's theological formulations was the conception of the individual as a sinner. As all individuals are liable to sin, the community which surrounds them has a religious duty to discipline those who 'backslide' into ungodly ways. Allied to this belief in a disciplining community is that of predestination. Predestination points to the existence of an elect population who have been chosen by God before the beginning of time for entry into the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who are among the elect will find that they cannot resist the draw of the church, while those engaged in sinful ways are probably among the 'reprobate' or damned population. Moreover, those who are reprobate should not

be allowed to live lives which sully the 'theatre to God's glory' which the world should represent (Mosse, 1963, p. 61). Calvin thus believed that there was an obligation upon the chosen to take responsibility for societal management, both within and outside the church (Gerrish, 1982). As a result, there is an onus upon believers to discipline those sinners in their wider community and to act as judge to one another's actions (Erskine, 1998).

The sober tenets of Presbyterianism were transformed to an extent by the 1859 evangelical revival in Ulster Protestantism. This Great Awakening mirrored the similar Catholic renewal and paradoxically led to a movement away from a strict adherence to a Calvinist ethos. However, recent decades have witnessed a steady outflow from the larger Protestant denominations, such as the Presbyterian Church, toward the smaller and theologically conservative—evangelical Protestant churches, notably the Elim Pentecostal Church and the New Churches Movement (N. Richardson, 1998, pp. 7–8). Part of the explanation given for this shift is the fear of influences which are believed to have entered some of the larger mainstream Protestant denominations as a result of ecumenism and liberal thinking. One highly visible church among the newer forms of worship is the Free Presbyterian Church associated with the religious and political leader, Dr Ian Paisley.

The Free Presbyterian Church is highly active in campaigns against the incursion of liberal influences into Northern Ireland. As well as protests against ecumenism, they have engaged in protests, through the media and picketing, against the staging of *Jesus Christ Superstar* in the Belfast Opera House and the operation of a family planning advice centre, the Brook Clinic, which was providing information about abortions to young women as part of a 'pro-choice' strategy. They have protested against the opening of sex shops and in particular a retail outlet aimed at transvestite men (the 'bump horns for decency' campaign), and the recent opening of a lap-dancing club in Belfast, and have condemned line-dancing as provoking lust. They have also been adamant in their condemnation of the annual Belfast Gay Pride Parade and led protests against Pride's use of public buildings:

...we want to make it abundantly clear once again that such a festival brings before us not normal behaviour but that which is abnormal ... it is against the law of God and therefore can only bring upon our city and its people the judgement of the Lord (Rev. Alan Smylie of the Government and Morals Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church)<sup>5</sup>.

As well as encouraging heterosexism within Northern Irish society in general, the effects of religious doctrine in shaping and disciplining the lives of members of the GLBT community was clearly evident in many of the transcripts of our interviewees, particularly those who were trying to resolve the conundrum of their faith and sexual desire.

Several individuals noted that church teaching on sexuality caused them considerable mental and emotional difficulties. Some individuals had been actively involved in their churches from an early age, and found that it became increasingly difficult to reconcile the two.

*Anne:* I had this strong, Catholic guilt thing going on as well after I was going out with that first girlfriend. I use the term 'friend' very reluctantly there. The thing when she started to hit me and whatnot, I was just thinking, 'This is what you have to expect, because you chose to be gay, and this is God's way of punishing you, and this is how we're going to beat the gayness

out of you. And this is all you'll ever have to expect and you don't deserve any better, because this is wrong, and there's nothing you can do about it'.

*Joan:* But you do get a lot of women ringing in with serious problems because a lot of the time they can't actually reconcile the teaching of the church, or who they are, and because the church is intransigent and showing no signs of moving at all to be inclusive. People are undoubtedly alienated and just walk away for reasons of their sexual orientation ... It's out there, people are gay, they're lesbian, bisexual, or whatever, this is human nature, and yet you have churches telling you this is wrong, there's something evil in this. I've been doing the line for X years ... [on] the Catholic-Protestant thing [it] would be the born-again, but having said that I have taken calls from Catholic women who have said 'Oh, the priest tells me it's wrong'. And then they do all this 'love the sinner, hate the sin' business ... you'd think you had this terrible disease. It's unbelievable. I think they have done untold damage. It's not as bad now as it used to be and part of that is that people generally are dissatisfied with religion, and if that means that they don't take this kind of baggage on, then that's a good thing.

While some remarked that they had internalised some of the churches negative judgements, other remarked that they had actively distanced themselves from their church:

*Tim:* I used to describe myself as a recovering Catholic, and now I describe myself as a fully recovered Catholic. To me, there's nothing in the Catholic Church for me as a gay person. Their official stance is that they are anti-gay, they don't condone it.

Moreover, several interviewees remarked on what they felt was the hypocrisy of the churches, which they perceived to hold large numbers of gay clergy.

Interestingly, a common anecdotal remark among interviewees was a sense that it was less difficult to be gay and Catholic in Northern Ireland than it was to be Protestant. While this could merely be dismissed as stereotypical images of the Catholic community, long-term volunteers on the Lesbian and Gay Men's Helpline echoed such thinking, for example:

I know from the Helpline where people do have problems, where people raise religion and have difficulty reconciling their sexuality, their religion tends more often to be Protestant, Presbyterian, Free Presbyterian, that kind of thing, rather than Catholic. It's rare that I would come across somebody where Catholicism and their sexuality is an issue ... you don't have this sort of fire and brimstone kind of speeches in the Catholic Church or anything like that. Again, it depends on people's ages. For younger people religion is much less of an issue these days. They might be worried about what their parents reaction is going to be from a religious point of view, the parents of Free Presbyterians are not going to like it, which is probably true. But it's certainly not so much an issue for themselves. You get the odd person who is heavily into religion, but not very much. We get calls from people who have been married for years and suppress their sexuality. And sometimes they still can have quite heavy connections to their church, so that can be an issue for them.

While this comment, and the ones above, do acknowledge the impact of religious thinking on those growing up within the churches, both also acknowledge the changes which have occurred for younger generations. Most young people are commonly depicted as being little concerned with religious teachings on sexuality, and many of their parents are similarly portrayed. Therefore, while some of our respondents continued to practice within churches where they were not open about their sexual orientation, the majority appeared to have moved away from the churches and to be in fact quite hostile to such institutions and their teachings. This, of course, does not negate homophobia generated within the heterosexual community by religious teachings.

## Nationalist Discourse

In addition to the role of religious discourse in disciplining sexuality, Ireland's increasing engagement with nationalism towards the end of the nineteenth century had a profound influence on gender and sexuality. Walshe (1996) has argued that postcolonial (e.g. Ireland) and still 'colonised' nationals (such as Northern Ireland) have particular difficulty with same-sex desire and homoeroticism because colonialism is itself cast as a gendered (and sexualised) process, with the coloniser cast as masculine and dominant and the colonised as feminine and passive. In the lead up to independence in the Republic of Ireland, Cairns and Richards (1988) argue that nationalists were well aware of the damaging link between 'Irish femininity' and subservience to 'British masculinity' and responded by seeking to emphasise the manly and masculine aspects of the Irish character, while simultaneously criticising a national disposition 'defined by Celticism—femininity, emotionalism, material and political incapacity' (p. 50). Here, they sought to challenge the stereotypes of the 'supposedly Irish feminine characteristics of sentimentality, ineffectuality, nervous excitability and unworldliness [that] rendered the Irish incapable of self-government' (Nash, 1995, p. 114; also see Aretxaga, 1997). Consequently, at this time a number of organisations such as the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Gaelic League were founded that sought to create a 'normative masculinity' (Mosse, 1996) that emphasised virility, honour, strength, courage and dignity (Martin, 1997; Nagel, 1998). Moreover, republican propaganda linked masculinity with militarism and the fight for liberty (Nash, 1993b, 1995; Frazier, 1997; Martin, 1997).

As a consequence, in response to colonialism Walshe argues that 'in Irish cultural discourse, silencing sexual difference became an imperative for consolidating a post-colonial identity because of a supposed link between homosexuality and enfeebled, 'feminised' masculinity ... therefore the post-colonial culture cannot permit any public, ideological acknowledgement of the actuality of the sexually 'other'. ... For a nation 'coming of age', the lesbian and gay sensibility must be edited out' (Walshe, 1996, p. 161). For Walshe, the editing out of same-sex desire in the South was because the 'newly created national identity required a denial of difference' (p. 162) in order to become established. As a result, 'a distrust of the 'unmanly' homosexual resulted in a complete obliteration of the homoerotic within nationalist discourse' (Walshe, 1997, p. 6). This ultimately resulted in strong heteropatriarchal notions of Catholic Natural Law being enshrined in the 1937 Constitution, a document drawn up by both State and the Catholic Church in which the family was recognised as the 'natural, primary, and fundamental unit of Society ... indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State'. The constitution made homosexuality, contraception, abortion and divorce illegal as these were seen as corrupting influences and were against the common good as they threatened the primacy of the family unit as the basic moral unit of society (Hug, 1999).

In the area which became Northern Ireland, the situation was necessarily different with a majority population claiming descent from seventeenth-century settlers from Scotland, England and Wales. Here the exposure of coloniser to colonised was both continuous and intimate. O'Dowd (1990) notes the strong tradition of militaristic public parading and displays of national flags and emblems amongst Northern Protestants. He points to this as a common aspect of coloniser behaviour,



designed to remind the colonised, and indeed the coloniser themselves, of their dominant and superior position. However, he also notes that the colonised in turn generate their own oppositional flags, marches and secret organisations in reaction to this spectacle of the coloniser (1990, p. 41). He remarks on this situation, saying that both 'coloniser and colonised are linked together in a reciprocal but mutually destructive relationship within which the identity of each is forged' (O'Dowd, 1990, p. 40). As this identity is forged through militaristic and fraternal associations it tends to create hypermasculine relations that privilege heterosexuality.

Moreover, the strong heteropatriarchal ideals being developed in the South were echoed in the northern counties by both the Catholic Church's 'shadow state' and a Unionist government which held strong attachments to an equally conservative religious ethos. Such influences included the various Protestant denominations and, indeed, the religious fraternal organisations such as the Orange Order and the Royal Black Preceptory. These groups ensured a civil society imbued with a strong religious ethos, which ensured that the Sabbath was honoured through the closure of shops and leisure facilities. As Conrad (2001) notes, this heterosexual familist narrative worked to exclude other masculinities and femininities, and in particular those that were non-heterosexual, and moreover suppressed secular individualism (Wills, 2001).

Given the colonial context of the nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland, following Walshe, it could be argued that the recent reluctance of both Unionist and Nationalist political parties to engage with queer politics in any meaningful and sustained way can be read as a form of gendered/sexual censorship, both camps seeking to adopt a 'dominant', masculinist position, one that erases homosexuality. For example, McClenaghan (1995, p. 124) details there has been a perception that to be a republican, one is also 'Catholic, nationalist and very much the upholder of "traditional family values" as dictated by the Catholic Church'. Similarly, loyalist political parties such as the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP; affiliated with the Free Prebysterian Church—FPC—through their joint figurehead, Dr Ian Paisley) have been at the forefront of campaigns to 'Save Ulster from Sodomy'. Indeed, DUP successfully blocked decriminalisation of homosexuality in Northern Ireland for a number of years, with decriminalisation only occurring in 1982 (15 years after England and Wales), through a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights. In addition, both the DUP and FPC have continued to use religious rhetoric, street protest and Parliamentary and Assembly question time to try to limit expressions of sexual difference/dissidence. For example, the DUP have submitted petitions to the Prime Minister against the lowering of the age of consent<sup>6</sup> and called for 'clean blood' with a ban on gay men giving blood donations<sup>7</sup>, as well supporting the FPC campaigns noted earlier. This resistance to sexual liberalisation is evidenced 'on-the-ground' in the ranks of the paramilitaries associated with political parties through the adoption of a hyper-masculine (Lysaght, 2002) heterosexual identity. Importantly, these paramilitary organisations actively police their local communities for what they view as anti-social behaviour. Sexual dissidence has been seen by certain organisations, operating within some localities, to represent an anti-social activity. Those who have been rumoured, or proven to be gay, or indeed involved in prostitution, have in certain cases been subject to attack and have been forced to leave their local communities (Kitchin & Lysaght, 2003).

Furthermore, homosexuality has long been associated with treachery and treason and thus a threat to national security, perhaps most notably expressed through the hearings of the House of Un-American activities and the McCarthy witch hunts (Wright, 1999). Consequently, this historical construction of homosexuality has been used to undermine the claims of 'sexual dissidents' (and gay men in particular) as legitimate, full citizens of the State. Conrad (1999) notes that gay men prior to the 1994 cease-fire were viewed by both republican and State forces as being vulnerable to blackmail, creating particular cultural representations of unreliability and weakness of character, and putting pressure on them to remain 'in the closet' and limit their political activity. She cites an article by Sean Cahill (1995, p. 53) in which he states: 'closeted gay men cruising along Derry's Foyle river are picked up by police or soldiers and threatened with outing to their friends and families if they don't become informers'. Similarly she reports McVeigh's (1994, p. 136) statement, 'the political harassment of gay people occurs when they are harassed because of assumed knowledge or contacts and their sexuality is perceived to be a "vulnerability" which will encourage them to "co-operate" with the police'. Here, (homo)sexuality becomes a material and symbolic arena of political demarcation, disciplined by nationalist concerns.

Conrad (1999) further notes that even when political parties have held more tolerant views they have actively resisted pursuing sexual rights for fear of alienating more conservative constituency members. For example, McClenaghan (1995) notes that Sinn Fein adopted a one-line motion supporting the lesbian and gay movement in 1980, but that in general actual political support has been minimal and tokenistic. When he tried to (successfully) extend the initial motion in the 1990s he met with some blatant homophobia along with resistance from other members who felt that active support of lesbian and gay issues would not gain the party support and might actually alienate core supporters and thereby jeopardise the central aim of the republican movement. Some suggest that their policy is more a reflection of their attempt to portray themselves as a party of civil rights, rather than a real commitment to sexual citizenship<sup>8</sup>. Such thinking is echoed by our interviewees. As Simon remarks on the subject of liberal nationalist politics:

I think that in the public forum they claim to be very liberal, but in private I think they probably express other views ... well I think that the SDLP do have an official policy although I don't think there's that much attention drawn to it. [Sinn Fein] tend to be more proactive in formulating policy in that field.

In much the same way, the working-class Protestant Loyalist Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) are credited as being the only Unionist party with clear positive statements in respect of gay rights issues. Indeed, when a campaign against anti-homophobic bullying in schools was launched a poster was designed naming the political parties which supported the campaign. Many of the unionist parties were conspicuous by their absence. However, the degree to which the policies of Sinn Fein and PUP reflect true commitment or mere political posturing was questioned by many of our respondents. Given that these parties hold their strength in working-class communities, in districts where many gay people would not choose to reside means that their commitments rarely have to be tested on the ground. That

said, many respondents saw the support of political parties as crucial to realising any real change in legislative terms.

It is important to stress here that, as noted above, political identities, positions and their associated political parties in Northern Ireland cannot be disconnected from the religious inspiration which underpins them. Remarking on the decision by the council to allow Gay Pride to use the City Hall for the formal festival launch, Simon details:

... it was very much Presbyterian dominated, and obviously decisions made are going to be based on their own personal philosophy or religious beliefs. So if they are coming across as having a very homophobic attitude, then that's going to reflect very much on decisions that are made with regard to Belfast. ... But the fact that the City Council is becoming more balanced in terms of its composition, has helped that change to happen. Therefore the Unionists can't really dominate a lot of the decision making that they were previously able to ... and it is obviously the Nationalist political opinions that are becoming more left-wing or liberal, thus allowing that sort of decision to be made that have been made over the past two years.

Moreover, while religion and politics are inextricably intertwined at the political level, the religiously mixed nature of gay social space ensures that religion impacts in various ways on internal gay relations. For example, some gay groups are perceived by some to be more Catholic or Protestant in composition, which in turn impacts on their future composition. As one female youth worker noted:

A lot of young people here would be Catholic for some reason. Probably about seven out of ten maybe ... given that the name of the person to contact is Moira, and people may sense that that's the type of group it's going to be, you know, quite a Catholic name like Moira, or Irish name, whatever way you like to put it. That's the way it is.

Further, respondents reported being careful about the districts in which they chose to live, thinking about both the gay and sectarian factors, and they were conscious of the religious and nationalist backgrounds of potential partners. As such, gay social networks, organisations and interpersonal relations are influenced by considerations of the religious and political division in Northern Ireland. While this can often be ignored in favour of common interests and agendas, it does re-emerge when incidents remind people of their religious identification. When a gay, Protestant, policeman was shot dead in The Parliament, a gay venue, religious and political identities were once again given salience. As Robert notes of the immediate aftermath:

I mean there was some tension after the murder of the policeman in the Parliament because the Protestants believed that it was an inside job by Catholics, you know, someone had done it.

It is possible to see, therefore, that while the religious and political identities of sexual dissidents are often muted and under-emphasised they are only ever just below the surface and can easily be re-ignited. As we detail below, the peace process has, however, introduced a certain degree of political stability into life in Northern Ireland, thereby allowing considerable change to be brought about for the general population but also for those who are GLBT.

### **Sexual Citizenship and the Peace Process**

Since the ceasefire in 1994, we contend that the changed political climate has led to sexual citizenship in Northern Ireland being redefined. While dialogue between

communities and the cessation of violent hostilities has been geographically uneven, our respondents uniformly emphasised the changed nature of life in Northern Ireland in recent years:

*Matthew:* One of the things I've noticed about the gay scene over the years is that now it seems to be much more confident than it was ten years ago, for example. And the people within it seem much more confident.

*Mark:* I think it has come on quite a bit. Most people don't care. Most people are too busy living their own lives to worry about homosexuality. ... Most people aren't bothered, they can accept the fact that you are gay. I mean, if you are not bothering them, so long as you're not invading their space, they are happy enough.

While many credit changing attitudes to the presence of numerous 'normal' gay and lesbian characters in television soap operas, in the music industry or in the pages of celebrity gossip magazines, it is possible to see the 'peace process' itself as a significant factor in improving conditions in at least four main ways, fostering: the growth of a significant voluntary sector dealing with gay issues in Northern Ireland; the introduction of a battery of new legislation which addresses cultural and social differences, including protection for individuals who are GLBT; a significant change in the nature of policing of homophobic incidents and cruising/cotaging by the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI); the growth of gay (and mixed) social opportunities and venues.

A number of politically aware GLBT organisations now exist in Northern Ireland, pushing forward a gay rights agenda started in the 1970s. These include the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA), Queer Space, CARA friend incorporating the Gay Men's Helpline and Lesbian Line, Belfast Pride, Foyle Friend, GLYNI (Gay Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland), the Rainbow Project (gay men's health project) and COSO (Coalition on Sexual Orientation). The majority of these projects are Belfast-based, and many operate in a small district within the city centre, which is also home to the principal gay social venues in the city. While a number of these projects were in existence prior to the ceasefires and offer a variety of what could be viewed as 'traditional' gay services (from health information to befriending and lobbying), there is a general acknowledgement that they are now operating in a rapidly changing political and social milieu. The reason for the new climate relates directly to the 'peace process', in both the transformed financial situation of the voluntary sector in the years following the 1994 ceasefires, and in the legislative environment which is undergoing rapid reorganisation.

The financial fortunes of the 'gay sector' benefited from a more widespread windfall of funding which marked the early years of the 'peace process'. In an effort to cement peace in Northern Ireland, there was a concerted effort to inject a substantial amount of money into voluntary sector activity to ensure a bottom-up welcoming of peace, which it was hoped would meet any top-down political settlement. The most significant funding package was the European Union's Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, although substantial amounts of money came from private American sources. The gay sector, being engaged in both empowerment activities and being entirely mixed in its religious composition maximised their position at this time and succeeded in gaining a number of new positions for paid staff.

In addition to the transformation of the fortunes and capacities of organisations operating within the voluntary sector, a raft of new equality legislation was introduced and a new Equality Commission established in the wake of the *Good Friday Agreement*<sup>9</sup>. This anti-discrimination legislation is helping to transform, in general terms, attitudes to a variety of different identities (e.g. *Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997*, *Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998*, *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*, *Northern Ireland Act (1998)*, *Equality (Disability, etc.) (Northern Ireland) Order 2000*). As yet, sexual orientation is covered explicitly only in the *Northern Ireland Act (1998)* when an obligation was placed on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity. This means that while those employed in the public sector are now afforded certain protection against discrimination and dismissal, those in the private sector remain vulnerable. In addition, the *Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) (1999)* provide legal rights for those who have transformed their gender through 'medical supervision' (clause 2(1)). The *Protection from Harassment Act (1997)* has as yet not been extended to Northern Ireland. At the time of writing, a single Equality Act that will include sexual orientation in all aspects of daily life (i.e. beyond public authorities) is due to be introduced in 2005, with a White Paper published in 2003<sup>10</sup>. The Equality Commission was established under the terms of the *Northern Ireland Act (1998)* and in 1999 took over the functions previously exercised by the Commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland, the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland, the Fair Employment Commission and the Northern Ireland Disability Council. At the time of the interviews, the Equality Commission could only help in relation to discrimination by public authorities, although they were taking forward a number of test cases in relation to sexual orientation.

In general terms, sexual orientation appears to be included in legislative reforms as part of a wider transformation of the legal landscape rather than as a particular commitment to sexual citizenship. Respondents active in the consultation processes were highly aware that this amounted to winning legal protection through the back door. They acknowledged the powerful role which small marginal parties such as the Women's Coalition had upon bringing sexual orientation into line with other categories such as disability and race. As Tim, a gay activist involved with lobbying and consultation work notes on the subject of Section 75 of the *Northern Ireland Act*:

*Tim*: I think it was mostly the Women's Coalition that got a lot of that in. The likes of Ian Paisley and so on took his eye off the ball because they were too busy worrying about decommissioning and all that kind of stuff ... or they were just saying 'No' to it. So, there's actually quite a lot of positive stuff in there ... the Act was in long before any of those reactionary elements would have got it in.

Further, while the extension of anti-discriminatory legislation was widely welcomed by those interviewed, they also acknowledged the changes as a mere first successful step in a long process of lobbying for change. A representative of The Rainbow Project, a gay men's health organisation notes:

You can still be sacked because you are gay. That's the reality. So, I suppose if you're looking at it culturally, this is a foot in the door of this whole policy making and legislative circus, ... it's like ... people are a bit used to the idea of policy for gay people, so now we are looking at

developing that all the time, and to a point where we will have employment legislation and discrimination employment legislation. But that's the reality, it's a huge thing to have that there. But it's still very confined in what it can do ... Okay, you've got a policy which says you can't discriminate against lesbians and gays in terms that you are providing services; what are you going to do in terms of training, or how does that really impact for the frontline people who are delivering the services? How are they going to change their daily way of doing their job? It's a huge development and it's a really positive thing, seeing it played out and hopefully how it develops in real terms for the protection of members of the community.

As Tim notes, however, this legislative change is only one aspect and just as important for transforming the legal bounds of sexual citizenship will be the extent to which cases are taken against discrimination by the members of the GLBT community, a situation he feels is starting to occur.

*Tim:* One of the issues will be whether people are willing to take cases or not ... I think there are more people coming along who are more willing to say 'Justice isn't being done to me and I'm willing to stand up for it'. ... I'm not sure which is coming first. I think as people are more confident, sexual orientation will be put into the Belfast Agreement. And then the fact that it is put in, it means that the public authorities have to consult, which makes people more confident. So hopefully we are on a virtuous circle these days in terms of, as people become more confident things change, and as things change, more people become more confident.

Another change brought by the peace process in Northern Ireland was a move toward a normalisation of policing for a post-conflict society. Policing during the course of the conflict had concentrated upon detecting terrorist plans and operations while ordinary policing duties were either ignored or under-emphasised. The years which followed the paramilitary ceasefires were a period when policing in Northern Ireland underwent substantial restructuring and concerted efforts were made to gain the support of a community widely alienated from a highly militarised police force. These changes culminated in the reorganisation of policing into a new body, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), which was designed to address the large religious imbalance of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). One area in which concerted efforts were placed was that of creating a proactive approach to 'hate crime', whether these incidents were triggered by racist or homophobic motivations.

Changes to the policing of homophobic incidents have been welcomed cautiously by the majority of our respondents. Their hesitation relates directly to years of negative dealings with police personnel, so building trust and confidence in new forms of policing is a necessarily slow process. In order to improve relations with the GLBT community the police force has now started to take hate-crime seriously, introducing a Force Order (July 2000) that covers 'homophobic incidents' and also issues around race and ethnicity (this extends beyond criminal matters such as assault and damage to include intimidation and verbal abuse). In addition, in each of the 38 subdivisions a Community Affairs Sergeant is responsible for liaison with the GLBT community and ethnic minority communities and for overseeing a Homophobic Incident Monitoring Scheme.

*Matthew:* The police now are in a situation where, like everybody else in this changing society, they are having to change. And ... now, for the first time, [they] are having to deal with reporting of homophobic hate crimes. ... And they are trying to persuade gay people that they can report this. Because there would be a fear that a lot of people wouldn't want to report stuff like that, because they feel they will not be taken seriously or they will be discriminated when they

get to the station. But the police are working to develop something more positive in that respect. It feeds back into the whole situation where we've had all the violence and now we have a situation where the police are having to deal with other things.

Those working within the Rainbow Project point to the changes in policing practice as positive developments. In particular, they note the new police attitude toward those engaged in cruising (looking for sex in public places frequented by 'men who have sex with men') and cottaging (looking for sex in public toilets). One representative of the group notes of the police attitude:

...they have had a change of tactic in the last twelve/eighteen months. They have to obviously react to public complaints, but if they are going to do a swoop on a 'cottage' or on a cruising area, they will give us a day or two notice so that we can get notices out around the bars and clubs. [Reading one of these posters he continues] ... public toilets and cruising grounds in the city are constantly monitored ... if you intend cruising for sex you do so at your own risk' .... So there is that change of emphasis now, whereas before it would be very much entrapment ... [now] they are basically going to put it in the same vein as perhaps straight people being caught having sex in a public place. And they are going down the caution route ... and if there's a repeat offence, then perhaps have a look at charging. Whereas before there was a very heavy handed approach ... and there have been serious cases where men's names appeared in the paper for cottaging and they have committed suicide afterwards ... So, there is a greater sensitivity toward those issues ... which they are now trying to address.

While such remarks acknowledge change within policing practice and emphasis, many note their scepticism of such change filtering down from management rhetoric to alter the attitude of police officers on the ground dealing with actual incidents. Many point out that they have perceived little change in general policing attitudes and several respondents note having to actively seek access to the Community Affairs Sergeant in the face of denials of the existence of such a sergeant by officers at the scene of incidents. Therefore, while both legislative and policing changes are viewed as tokenistic, accidental and more a matter of management rhetoric than practical application, they are also viewed as valuable stepping stones from which to work toward real societal transformation. The power of such legislative and policy shifts, however, depends entirely on their active implementation, which necessitate as Tim notes above, the willingness to take cases, or to report incidents. This remains a significant problem while many continue to fear being 'outed' through involvement in such potentially public activities as pursuing criminal prosecutions and discrimination cases.

Finally, the GLBT community in Belfast is becoming more visible and vocal through the development of gay venues, although they remain limited in comparison to other major United Kingdom cities. As in many cities, Belfast's gay social scene was located in a marginal district, where entry and exit were largely invisible due to it being deserted outside the commercially active period between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Given the small geographical area of Northern Ireland and its moral conservatism, such invisibility suited many who were living lives in which, most of the time, they were 'closeted'. Few non-gay people socialised in these venues, making them a relatively safe and anonymous space. This situation changed radically in the late 1990s as the city emerged from conflict and the city centre started to become populated at night.

In the years following the declaration of ceasefires by the various paramilitary bodies in 1994 investment capital entered Northern Ireland in significant measures.

As a market, Northern Ireland displayed highly deflated property prices, which increased rapidly in the mid-1990s with inward investment and improved consumer confidence. Many people chose to return to live in a city where new bars, nightclubs and restaurants were opening on a near-weekly basis. While much of this development occurred in the south of the city in the area of Queen's University, many investors targeted the under exploited city centre. New apartment developments were constructed, a concert hall and various upmarket hotels built, new designer bars opened and plans were put in place for the development of new shopping zones and a cultural district in the north of the city centre. This cultural district, the Cathedral Quarter, was envisaged as replicating the success of similar economically-led ventures such as Temple Bar in Dublin.

The geographical area targeted to be the new cultural quarter overlapped exactly with the area in which the various gay social outlets and voluntary organisations in the city were located. New designer bars were built and several new nightclubs opened bringing much late night activity into the area, which contrasted sharply with the pre-ceasefire situation. Not only did this new population of city centre socialites venture into the new bars and clubs in substantial numbers, but there was also a considerable movement into the (self-advertised) 'Premier Gay Bar in Northern Ireland': The Parliament. These changes to the post-ceasefire gay social scene met with varying responses by our interviewees when discussed.

While many welcomed the increased social opportunities afforded by the arrival of new bars, which were highly trendy and for the most part gay-friendly, the majority bemoaned the fact that The Parliament 'has become terribly straight'. Several reported experiencing homophobia within the venue in recent years, whether in the form of direct remarks or looks from straight men or women who visited The Parliament in groups to avail of the venue's reputation as a vibrant dance scene.

*Simon:* It's [now advertised as] gay-friendly. That's actually pissed a lot of people off ... the result is that you could now go to the Parliament and maybe meet people whom you work with, who are straight ... There was this morbid fascination by a lot of straight people at the start who wanted to see what a gay bar was like ... it might be just a one-off occasion. And then all of a sudden it is all over work that 'oh, did you know so and so is gay? I saw him in The Parliament last night'. It's okay for a straight person to go to The Parliament, but they have nothing to lose by it, whereas somebody who wants to keep a very discrete lifestyle and they want to delineate that social aspect from their professional life ... and all of a sudden that segregation has been broken down.

At the time when the reputation of The Parliament was moving toward being increasingly straight, the other main gay venue, The Crow's Nest, closed its doors to business. Rumours circulated that the bar was to be redeveloped as a superpub, maximising its location in the Cathedral Quarter district. Despite such fears, however, the bar was reopened as a gay venue after a period of several months under the new name of The Customs House. In addition to these two venues, several of the bars and clubs in the Cathedral Quarter district developed 'gay nights', usually on quiet nights in the early part of the week. A women-only night was held monthly in a local bar, while a new dance club, Milk, held a gay night on Mondays, and an older establishment in the area started a similar night on Wednesdays. Some establishments which had a single gay night in the week were reputed to be less than gay-friendly on other nights of the week.



Cynicism about the motives of those running the various outlets within the gay social scene led to regular accusations that they had more interest in the 'pink pound' than in the actual needs of gay people. In response to such feelings, a new gay venue was opened in the Cathedral Quarter district in the early post-ceasefire period. The Kremlin was advertised as a gay venue run 'by and for gay people'. It placed emphasis upon bringing in shows from England or further a field to entertain its customers. The Kremlin quickly became the main gay venue in the city, keeping a strict gay-only door policy.

Other developments within the wider gay social scene included the formation of groups such as 'Men of the North', a social group designed to bring gay men together for social purposes who did not feel comfortable, or want to be part of a younger dance scene. This, together with social opportunities offered by groups such as Queerspace or Cara Friend and Pride, ensure that the gay social opportunities are increasing significantly in recent years.

There have been considerable changes, therefore, for gay people in post-ceasefire Northern Ireland. The younger generation who are emerging onto the gay scene are acknowledged to be more confident, and have fewer difficulties 'coming out' to friends and family. In fact, various organisations interviewed acknowledged a necessary shift in the nature of their services to echo such change. The provision of new social opportunities, of health workers, of a counselling service, of lobbying roles and campaigns to stop homophobic bullying in schools had largely replaced previous befriending and telephone support work. A long-term volunteer with the Gay Men's Helpline illustrates this clearly when he notes:

Numbers are dropping off a bit over the last few years in terms of what they might have been at their peak. ... I think less people need helpline services, but other needs have opened up, like the work ... with the youth group ... I think it's the fact that the scene is well known and publicised. You'd nearly need to have your head in the sand not to know that. Certainly, when I first came out I wouldn't necessarily have known where the gay bars were in Belfast ... Now people will say to you 'We know where the bars are, but we want to know what they are like' ... That kind of thing. So people know that it exists. And a lot of people would just go off on their own bat ... even if it ended up two novices going into the bar together ... Whereas in the past people would have been much more isolated, and not told anybody, whereas now people tend to have told a circle of other people.

## **Conclusion**

In this article we have mapped out the bounds of sexual citizenship in Belfast, paying particular attention to discourses of religion and nationalism, and illustrated how the Peace Process has offered opportunities to challenge and destabilise hegemonic moral conservatism.

Tracing religious and nationalist discourses from the nineteenth century onwards it is clear that both Catholicism and Protestantism have sought to discipline sexual behaviour, forging a power/knowledge monopoly on sexual morality and praxis. While sexuality was increasingly being regulated across Europe by both Church and State, the particular conditions in Ireland—the 'devotional revolution', ultramontanism, and Jansenism in relation to Catholicism; Calvinism, the 1859 revivalism and their particular distillation across the Protestant denominations; and the tension between Catholicism and Protestantism—led to the institutionalisation

of social puritanism and long-term moral conservatism. In addition, the rise of Irish nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century led to a reclaiming and redefining of Irish femininity and masculinity that directly contrasted with colonial stereotypes but at the same time led to a silencing of sexual difference and the adoption of a heteropatriarchal family unit as the cornerstone of society. This Irish nationalism was matched by a resurgence in Unionist identification among the Protestant population in equal and opposing measures. The tension between nationalists and unionists led to religion being mapped onto the social and political landscape so that the moral conservatism of the respective churches was mirrored in civil society and political ideology, this continuing post-partition.

The outcome of these religious and nationalist discourses has been a highly regulated sexual landscape characterised by limited sexual rights that has persisted to the present day. As we have illustrated, the Peace Process has started to destabilise this hegemonic moral conservatism through the creation of an arena in which civil/legal, political and social rights are being examined and renegotiated across the entire spectrum of Northern Irish society. While progress in relation to sexual citizenship has, to date, been relatively limited, with little legislative change, only a small visible 'gay community', and widespread homophobia, what changes have occurred are viewed by the GLBT community as highly significant, providing a platform from which to build. Here, sexual citizenship is viewed in highly liberal ways, as something that is achievable through legislation, policing, education and so on; as something that can be created through campaigning and political and social action rather than something that can only be achieved through a complete restructuring and reconstitution of society. While it might be tempting to use the data we have generated to envisage a radical vision of sexual citizenship it would not be representative of the views of the individuals we interviewed and it is extremely unrealistic proposition given the present political situation in Northern Ireland. The Peace Process is undoubtedly leading to significant changes to the lives of members of the GLBT community in Belfast, their lives remain shaped, however, to some degree, by religious and nationalist discourses that limit, in uneven and unequal ways, their sexual lives. That said, a positive transformation is slowly occurring.

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### **Notes**

1. GLBT refers to individuals whose identity is defined by themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual.
2. This study in turn was part of a wider Economic and Social Research Council funded project investigating how fear shapes the everyday lives of people living in the city.
3. In undertaking an examination of the impact of religious thought upon the shaping of sexual citizenship, it is important to note that the main churches have remained as all-Ireland bodies after the partition of the island

- in 1921. As a result, they disseminate identical messages on both sides of the border. This is particularly salient for the Catholic Church, as it has significant populations in both jurisdictions.
4. The majority of members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland live within a 15 mile radius of Belfast (Holmes, 2000, p. 133). The population given for Northern Irish Presbyterians in the 1991 census is 337 000 (Erskine, 1998, p. 48).
  5. The quote is a condemnation of the granting of permission by Belfast City Council for the City Hall to be used for the opening reception of the Pride festival.  
<http://www.dataounge.com/dataounge/news/record.html?record=4259>
  6. <http://www.dataounge.com/dataounge/news/record.html?record=3862>
  7. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/northern\\_ireland/1563360.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/northern_ireland/1563360.stm)
  8. It should be noted, however, that Sinn Fein currently has an openly gay councillor in North Belfast.
  9. The *Good Friday Agreement*, signed in 1998, is a political framework designed to respect differences and provide a model of governance based on 'parity of esteem' rather than majority rule. More broadly it has sought to address relationships within Northern Ireland; between Northern Ireland and the Republic; and between both parts of Ireland and England, Scotland and Wales.
  10. <http://www.equalityni.org/whatsnew/newslist.cfm?catid=1>

## Abstract Translation

En este artículo examinamos los contornos y la construcción de la ciudadanía sexual en Belfast, Irlanda del Norte a través de entrevistas a fondo con treinta miembros de la comunidad gay, lesbiana, bisexual y transexual y un análisis discursivo de los discursos de la religión y del nacionalismo. En la primer mitad del artículo damos un esbozo de como se construyó la ciudadanía sexual en el contexto Irlandés a partir de la mitad del siglo diecinueve. Argumentamos que un conservatismo moral se desarrolló como resultado de la reforma religiosa y de la interacción entre la iglesia católica y la protestante, y de la redefinición de la masculinidad y de la feminidad con el ascenso del nacionalismo. En la segunda mitad del artículo, detallamos como el Proceso de la Paz ha brindado nuevas oportunidades para desafiar y desestabilizar los discursos hegemónicos de la ciudadanía sexual al transformar la legislación y la vigilancia policial, y al fomentar las inversiones hacia dentro y el aburguesamiento.

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