

The Effect of Group Identity on Support for Political Violence: Evidence from Northern Ireland

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

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Miceal Canavan

On Raglan road on an autumn day

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Abstract

Why do people support political violence in peaceful contemporary democracies? In recent years scholars have increasingly sought to understand what drives individuals to adopt radical attitudes in societies where there is not active conflict and where peaceful democratic competition is the norm. This nascent strand of literature has identified a number of important determinants such as individual predispositions, personality traits, catalytic political events and other important contextual factors. Furthermore, reflecting classic work on civil conflict this new research has also emphasised the centrality of group identity. This thesis seeks to build on this work on the relationship between group identity and support for political violence. More specifically, it analyzes how multiple overlapping group identities shape open support for political violence in different ways, how they influence the concealment of attitudes towards political violence, and finally how they moderate the way in which high profile acts of political violence influence attitudes towards political violence. Alongside this it also contributes to the literature on the political determinants of support for political violence, and the surprising way in which gender influences these radical attitudes. To test the arguments presented it focuses on Northern Ireland and employs multivariate regression analysis of survey data, list experiments, and unexpected event during survey design analysis.

The first empirical chapter focuses on the complexity of identity structures and disentangling the effect of multiple overlapping identities on radical attitudes. To this point, most quantitative analysis of support for violence have focused on large group identities and often reference these identities in the questions on political violence. Although there are important justifications for this approach, it potentially overlooks the role of smaller groups in the process of radicalization. Drawing on qualitative literature on radicalization and armed groups, with more recent quantitative work on multiple overlapping identities,

this chapter explores the importance of smaller identity subsets as determinants of support for political violence. Through analysis of more granular data on patterns of identification and an identity neutral phrasing of questions on support for political violence, this chapter shows that smaller group subsets are the most important determinants of support for political violence. It also highlights the role of individual political factors, showing that those who turn to political violence have disproportionately high interest in politics but are often disconnected with formal political processes.

The second chapter is interested in how group norms shape concealment of attitudes towards political violence. It takes as its starting point recent literature which claims that support for political violence in contemporary democracies is overestimated, and counter-argues that support for violence is a stigmatized preference which may actually lead to an underestimation of support for violence as individuals conceal their true attitudes in responses to survey questions. It argues that the propensity to conceal support for political violence is likely to be influenced by group history and elites, which in turn shape the group norms around expressing support for violence. In particular, groups which have been oppressed historically, relied on political violence, and often celebrated those who die in armed struggle, will be more willing to openly support political violence. This will be further enhanced where contemporary political elites were involved in, or continue to endorse, political violence. Conversely, historically dominant groups which have monopolised state oppression, and were led by political elites who criticised political violence in public whilst supporting it covertly, will develop norms against openly supporting political violence. This chapter uses a list experiment to first show that political violence is significantly higher when measured through this indirect question relative to an open question on support for political violence. Secondly, this effect is almost entirely driven by concealment of support for violence amongst those who identify with historically dominant groups. Lastly, and more provocatively, this chapter also shows that gender differences in support for violence disappear when measured through a list experiment.

The final chapter seeks to answer a classic question regarding cycles of violence and retribution. The generally accepted understanding is that ‘violence begets violence’, however, this paper proposes that group identity may play an important role in this process. In particular, this chapter argues that how people respond to political violence will be shaped by the identity of those perpetrating

the violence, the target of violence, and the identity of the respondent. Specifically, it argues that violent riots will increase support for violence amongst co-partisans of those rioting, however, the effect on the out-group will depend on the target of the riots. Using an unexpected event during survey design, it analyses the effect of large, politically-motivated, violent riots on support for political violence. The results show that violent riots increase support for political violence among copartisans of those rioting but has no effect on the outgroup. The second half of this chapter explores whether this effect is due to a real change in underlying attitudes or the willingness to express these preferences openly. Drawing on classic work on preference falsification, it proposes that the observed change in attitudes is driven by changes in willingness to openly express a stigmatized preference rather than a change in underlying attitudes. Using a comparison of responses to list experiments and direct questions before and after the onset of riots, it shows that the apparent change in attitudes is driven almost entirely by a change in revealed preferences of copartisans of those rioting.

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1 Chapter 1: Introduction

Political violence remains an enduring challenge in contemporary society. Since the end of the second world war, intrastate conflict has become the dominant form of political violence and is the overwhelming cause of conflict-related deaths (Gleditsch, Melander, and Urdal 2016). Furthermore, in recent years, the threat of political violence and challenge to peaceful democratic competition has increased in countries previously seen as politically stable and relatively peaceful (Krause 2016; Qureshi 2018; Beauchamp 2021; Kleinfeld 2021; Kalmoe and Mason 2022b). Given the threat of political violence in established democracies, scholars have increasingly sought to understand why individuals choose to support violent action in contexts beyond those afflicted by active conflict. Although a range of factors have been identified as important, a commonality between much of this recent literature on attitudes towards political violence, and classic work on intrastate and ethnic conflict, is the importance of group identity and intergroup antagonism, with groups often identified as playing a key role in shaping the motivation of perpetrators and the targeting of victims (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Weinstein 2006; Kleinfeld 2021; Kalmoe and Mason 2022b).

That group identities have an important influence on political attitudes is now well established, and therefore, this dissertation takes the importance of identity in motivating political action as a core premise on which the theory and

approach are based (Huddy and Bankert 2017; Mason 2018). This understanding does not rely on a primordial interpretation of identity or intergroup conflict which assumes that groups are enduring and conflict between them inevitable, rather, much of the theoretical framework developed relies on an explicitly constructivist understanding of identity and intergroup conflict. Specifically, this dissertation is focused on how small subsets of large groups identities shape support for political violence, how group norms influence the concealment of support for political violence, and how group identity moderates the effect of exposure to political violence on support for political violence.

Each of the chapters in this dissertation addresses a gap or challenge in existing research on support for political violence. The second chapter focuses on how different identities are analysed in relation to political violence. Existing research often assumes the identities which are important to respondents in their support for political violence, and explicitly mentions these identities in the question purporting to measure attitudes towards political violence. For example, it is common for surveys to ask whether violence perpetrated by [in-group] against [out-group] is justified, or whether respondents have sympathy for violence perpetrated by X-group (Hayes and McAllister 2005). However, this approach limits the identities which can be analysed in relation to support for political violence. Although there are clearly circumstances in which researchers are interested in specific identities, it may underestimate overall support for political violence in the population, and/or overestimate support for political violence amongst the identified groups.¹ This is a particular challenge where there are multiple overlapping identities - a common phenomenon in contemporary political competition (Mason 2018). This chapter proposes

¹This argument is developed further in the chapter but in short it is that those who support violence may express this even if the groups mentioned are not the primary source of their extreme attitudes.

that this has potentially led to a mismatch between the quantitative macro literature and qualitative micro studies regarding the role of different but related group identities in support for political violence. By allowing respondents to choose from a broader range of identities, and excluding reference to specific identities in questions on political violence, this chapter proposes and shows that small groups, which are subsets or splinters from large identity groups, are the primary determinants of support for political violence.

The third chapter focuses on a contemporary debate regarding the accurate measurement of support for political violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2022b; Kalmoe and Mason 2022a; Westwood et al. 2022). Existing work in this area has generally focused on whether support for political violence is overestimated due to the way in which questions are worded and interpreted by respondents, however, there has been almost no discussion of whether support for political violence is underestimated. This chapter explores whether support for political violence is a stigmatized preference for certain respondents, which makes them unwilling to openly endorse political violence. It proposes that the propensity to conceal support for political violence will be shaped by the respondents' group identity. Specifically, the historical experience of different groups and the political elites will shape the norms regarding regarding openly supporting political violence. This chapter argues that this will lead to certain groups concealing their attitudes towards political violence, leading to a significant underestimation of support for violence.

The fourth and final empirical chapter seeks to explore a question which has proved challenging to analyse to this point - the effect of real-world political violence on attitudes towards political violence. Due to ethical challenges replicating real-world political violence believably in an experimental setting, understanding the effects of political violence on attitudes has proved challenging.

In particular, much of the existing research uses data collected after violence has taken place, and although there are a number of excellent papers which use empirical strategies to address this, there remain challenges with establishing a clear causal link between violence and change in attitudes (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, Rapaport, et al. 2016; Zeitzoff 2018) This chapter uses a novel experiment design, the unexpected event during survey design (UEDS), to analyse the impact of sustained politically-motivated, violent rioting on public attitudes towards political violence. It argues that responses to the riots will be shaped by the identity of the rioters and the respondent, and also the target of the rioting. It shows that violent rioting cause an increase in support for political violence among co-partisans of those rioting but no effect amongst opposition partisans and those who are unaligned.

In terms of the empirical approach, the second chapter relies on survey data capturing more granular information on patterns of identification and analyses these using relatively straightforward regression models. Chapter 3 uses a combination of list experiments questions and direct questions to reveal concealed attitudes towards political violence, and compare these across important groups. Lastly, chapter 4 utilizes an unexpected event during survey design to analyse the onset of violent riots on attitudes towards political violence. It also draws on a combination of direct questions and list experiment questions to analyse whether the change in attitudes is driven by a change in underlying preferences, or simply the willingness to openly express these preferences.

In summary, the objective of this dissertation is to contribute both theoretically and methodologically to the literature on the relationship between group identity and support for political violence.

1.1 Why political violence?

This dissertation is focused on support for political violence. Most of the research on political violence has focused on conflict zones, and generally on former or active militants.² In contrast with this traditional work on political violence, but in line with recent research on support for political violence in the United States, this study focuses on support for political violence among ordinary individuals in contexts which are generally considered peaceful democracies (Kalmoe and Mason 2022b). The threat of political violence in contexts which are generally considered peaceful democracies is significant and increasing. Obvious manifestations of this can be seen in widely publicised acts of political violence. The clearest and most well known example are the Capitol Riots which erupted on 6th January 2021 in the USA. Although this was the most intensely covered instance, it is not an isolated event, with political violence becoming ever more prominent in the United States (Kalmoe and Mason 2022b; Sargent 2022). Similarly in the UK there have been two high profile murders of sitting MPs in England since 2016, a rare occurrence with only seven other recorded killings of sitting MPs since 1800. Notably, the perpetrators and motivations for these killings were very different but ultimately both linked back to group identity, specifically white supremacy and Islamic extremism. Similarly, in early 2021, Northern Ireland witnessed the highest profile and most intense violent rioting in the region since the end of the civil conflict in the late 1990s. Beyond anecdotal evidence, there is research which also appears to show an increase in support for violence in the USA and parts of Europe (Krause 2016; Qureshi 2018; Beauchamp 2021; Kleinfeld 2021; Kalmoe and Mason 2022b). Clearly, the threat of political violence from ordinary civilians

²See, for example, Weinstein (2006), Fearon and Laitin (2003), and Cederman, Wimmer, and Min (2010)

in contexts which are generally considered peaceful democracies is significant and potentially increasing.

This dissertation is focused on support for political violence, and although obvious, it is important to acknowledge that expressed support for political violence cannot be equated with actual political violence. Whilst there is likely to be a strong positive correlation between support for political violence and actual participation in acts of violence, not all (or even a majority) of those who express support for political violence may even participate in actual violence. However, as noted by Kalmoe and Mason (2022b) holding extreme attitudes is highly likely to be ‘a risk factor for violent acts by each citizen, both as part of a broader context that encourages other people to act and as a plausible insight into. . . who would be most likely mobilized into violence’. Furthermore, not only are those who express support for political violence more likely to participate in violence, but they also often provide the support structures necessary for the perpetration of violence.

The tacit endorsement or explicit support of those in the wider community is critical for perpetrators of political violence, particularly in contexts where conventional warfare (e.g. two armies fighting at a front) is unlikely. Firstly, supporters of political violence are more likely to provide cover and shelter to active participants in political violence. This concept is core to guerrilla warfare, where the people are often compared to the “sea” in which the guerrilla fish “swim” (Valentino, 2004). This understanding of political violence and rebellion was used extensively by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland, where residential houses and civilians were used to hide ammunition and shelter combatants. Secondly, individuals who support political violence are also more likely to provide material support, often financial support, for those participating in conflict. Lastly, even if individuals are not willing to

provide active support due to the risks, they are less likely to report accurate information to authorities about those participating in or planning political violence. Whatever one thinks of the morality of political violence in any given context, it is clear that even where those who support political violence are unlikely to actually perpetrate violence, their tacit or active support makes violence in the community more likely and difficult to combat.

The dissertation is particularly interested in the relationship between political violence and group identity. Research from across the social sciences and behavioural biology demonstrates that human behaviour cannot be fully understood without a clear understanding of our propensity for groupish behaviour. This extends to the political realm, with group identity consistently highlighted as an important influence on a range of political attitudes and behaviour (Carey 2002; Mason 2018; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2019). The importance of identity often becomes most stark when politics escalates to violence, and intergroup conflict can result in sustained and brutal violence which leaves a damaging legacy on individuals and society (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Hobfoll, Mancini, et al. 2011; Canetti et al. 2017). Although there are clearly other important determinants of support for violence, this dissertation focuses primarily on groups given the complex and deep relationship between group identity and political violence.

In summary, the threat of political violence appears to be increasing in many contexts which were previously considered stable democracies, and group identities have been identified as key to this process. Although support for political violence is not a measure of actual participation in political violence, it is clearly a risk factor for violence, and the support of other group members who support political violence provides the social support structure necessary for political violence to take place.

1.2 Understanding political violence

Political violence encompasses a vast array of action ranging from the destruction of property through to homicide. The key unifying feature which distinguishes this from criminal violence is that it is carried out in order to achieve a political objective. The ‘repertoires’ of violence deployed across conflicts often vary extensively, as do the perpetrators and their political objectives. Classic work on social movements and collective violence, including some of the first cross-national empirical analysis of ‘domestic violence that had an antisystem character’, classified various forms of political violence into two clusters - collective protests and internal wars (Hibbs 1973; Tilly 1978). This very early work on the causes of conflict specified a predictive model which looks remarkably similar to many discussed in contemporary conflict literature, focusing on factors such as the economy, political leaders, ethnic groups and education (Hibbs 1973). Although these early works on political violence embraced the complexity of the phenomenon and laid the foundations of the field, their focus was primarily on explaining the onset of civil conflict at a national level, rather than understanding why individuals choose to participate.

This focus on explaining conflict onset continued into the 21st century (Collier and Hoeffler 2014; Fearon and Laitin 2003), however, as this research agenda expanded, some scholars suggested that there might be a disconnect between the macro explanations for conflict and the micro-motivations of individual participants. This new strand of research argued that macro structural factors may not adequately explain why an individual would take the risk to participate in violence, and in order to understand individual participation we need to consider the experiences and motivations at lower levels of analysis (Kalyvas 2008). The findings from this often qualitative strand of research which focused

on micro-motivations echoes some of the classic macro analysis, but extends this to a more nuanced set of explanations which take into account the complexity of motivations and the process of radicalization into violence over a period of time (Porta 2014; Weinstein 2006)

For the most part, this strand of research on individual participation focused primarily on countries which are experiencing or have recently experienced civil conflict. However, as the threat of political violence has increased in previously peaceful established democracies across Europe and the USA, this has sparked an increase in researchers seeking to understand political violence in these contexts (Kalmoe and Mason 2019; Muis and Immerzeel 2017; Smith and Zeigler 2017). Whilst still relatively nascent, a number of factors have been identified which contribute to an individual's willingness to support or participate in political violence in relatively peaceful contexts. A key factor which recurs consistently in classic conflict literature and recent work on political violence in established democracies is the importance of group identity (Kalmoe and Mason 2019; Fearon and Laitin 2003).

The below section briefly traces some of the existing research on group identity and political violence, particularly in contemporary democracies, to highlight where this dissertation fits into the literature and the key questions it seeks to address.

1.2.1 Group identity and support for political violence

In recent years, the upsurge in the threat of political violence has increased focus on understanding how and why *individuals* become radicalized. Explanations have fallen into a number of different categories. Firstly, certain people may have personality traits which predispose them to violence, and research has

established a clear link between personality traits such as trait aggression, dark triad personality traits and openness, and support for political violence (Kalmoe 2013; Kalmoe and Mason 2022b; Gøtzsche-Astrup 2021; Hogg and Adelman. 2013). Whilst the importance of personality traits cannot be overlooked, this explanation neglects the explicitly political aspect of political violence. Therefore, in addition to personality predisposition, research has also noted the importance of political or economic grievances, and how people respond to significant political events, particularly when they result in an outcome individuals disagree with (Hillesund and Østby 2020; Kalmoe and Mason 2022b). Lastly, and linked to the importance of grievances, a key explanation which is present across almost all work on political violence is the importance of group identity (Kalmoe and Mason 2022b; Fearon and Laitin 2003).

Initial research on group identity and political violence questioned the empirical basis of this relationship, with the seminal work of Collier and Hoeffler (2014) on civil conflict suggesting that group grievances played a limited role in conflict onset. However, subsequent research has consistently found that where there are significant inequalities between groups, this increases the risk of civil conflict (Hillesund 2015). At an individual level, recent research on support for political violence in the United States finds that partisan polarization amongst democrats and republicans is an important factor in higher levels of support for political violence (Gøtzsche-Astrup 2021; Kalmoe and Mason 2022b).³ Furthermore, a recent systematic review of predictors of political violence outcomes among young people found that five of the eleven strongest predictors were related to group identity (Jahnke, Abad Borger, and Beelmann 2022). In this analysis they found that a simple measure of ‘identification’ with a group was one of the strongest predictors of support for violence (Jahnke, Abad Borger,

³This is further exacerbated where it is accompanied by extreme views and attitudes along other group identities, such as race (Kalmoe and Mason 2019)

and Beelmann 2022).

The importance of group identity in the macro quantitative literature on conflict onset and political violence is mirrored in the micro literature on support for political violence and rebel group formation (Weinstein 2006; Porta 2014). However, whilst the quantitative literature generally emphasises the importance of large group identities such as ethnicity, religion, partisanship and nationality, the micro qualitative literature often focuses on smaller group identities or organisations (Porta 2008; McCauley and Moskalenko 2008; Littman and Paluck 2015). Whilst large group identities may be important for cultivating a broader shared sense of grievance, more extreme attitudes such as support for political violence are generally only endorsed by a very small proportion of the population. Therefore, it is possible that there are other smaller groups which play an important role in shaping these extreme attitudes. This thesis argues that smaller groups provide a more amenable environment for radicalization, and the enforcement of norms regarding support for political violence. It is in smaller groups that extreme attitudes towards political violence can be cultivated and perpetuated (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008).

Specifically, mechanisms such as group polarization which are more common in smaller groups, facilitate the shift towards the more extreme points of view through repeated interaction and discussion, with individuals being exposed to more extreme views of other group members (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008; Larson and Lewis 2018; Ferguson and McAuley 2020). Once more extreme views become accepted and endorsed by the group, norms regarding the legitimacy of supporting political violence can be clearly established. These norms result in those who embody the extreme group views receiving praise and reward, whilst those who deviate being sanctioned (Littman and Paluck 2015). Furthermore, related research focusing on the different dynamics of large group identities

(such as religion) and smaller mediating groups or organisations, shows that despite the perceived centrality of religion to the conflict in Israel-Palestine, there is no direct effect of religious identity on radical action, and that any effect is entirely mediated through membership of a smaller groups and networks (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016).

Crucially, these smaller groups and organisations are often often subsets of these larger identity groups or have splintered from them, which makes the empirical challenge more complex (Mason 2018; Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). This understanding of the importance of layers of identity draws on recent work focused on analysing how multiple compounding identities can have different effects and often generate more extreme views (Mason 2018). This challenge is potentially further exacerbated where specific identities are referenced in survey questions on support for political violence, and therefore the relative importance of different identities is more difficult to analyse.

Therefore, there appears to be a mismatch in much of the extant research between the large identities such as nationality, ethnicity or partisanship which have been used to analyse support for political violence in generally macro quantitative literature, and the group mechanisms for participation in political violence identified in the qualitative micro level literature. The second chapter of this dissertation seeks to provide a potential reconciliation by focusing on smaller identity groups, which are often subsets of these larger groups, as determinants of support for political violence. These smaller groups often have significant overlap with the larger group identities, and therefore analysis which does not include them in the model, may attribute the effect solely to the larger identity, when it is membership of the smaller group which might be critical for understanding support for political violence.

1.2.2 Group identity and concealed attitudes towards political violence

Recent research on support for political violence in the US has highlighted the worryingly high levels of support for violence. However, there has been some push-back against this research by those who believe that support for political violence may be overstated (Westwood et al. 2022). This critical strand of research argues that due to ambiguity in the way questions are worded, and misperceptions about out-group partisans' support for violence, prior research significantly overstates the levels of support for political violence. This dissertation does not challenge these critiques directly as others have defended the reliability and robustness of these findings convincingly elsewhere (Kalmoe and Mason 2022a), however, the existing literature on support for political violence may overlook the possibility that certain individuals may be motivated to conceal their support for political violence. In particular, this paper argues that political violence may be seen as a stigmatized preferences amongst certain individuals and groups, which leads to social desirability bias against openly endorsing it (Krumpal 2013; Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim 2022). As a result, existing research potentially underestimates support for political violence rather than overestimates it.

Research on social desirability bias generally focuses on individual character traits which lead to dishonest responding or topic sensitivity. However, this chapter proposes that group pressures and norms may also be a key factor in shaping honest responding. That certain groups have higher or lower propensity to conceal their views on sensitive topics has been hinted at in the broader literature on social desirability bias, with differences in concealed attitudes found across cultures and age groups on issues such as job preferences or

skills (Lalwani, Shrum, and Chiu 2009). The existing literature on concealment of attitudes in political research has generally focused on voting behaviour, but more recently this has been extended to conflict related sexual violence and ‘stigmatized’ political preferences (Traunmüller, Kijewski, and Freitag. 2019; Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim 2022). Specifically, in Spain, researchers found evidence that right wing people were likely to understate their positive attitudes towards Franco due to perceived social desirability bias (Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim 2022). If individuals are willing to misrepresent their attitudes on relatively simple questions such as job preferences or voting behaviour through to more controversial attitudes such as support for fascist leaders, it is possible that some people will misrepresent their views on a sensitive and highly contentious topic such as support for political violence. Furthermore, given the importance of group identity in shaping attitudes towards political violence, the propensity of individuals to conceal their views is likely to be influenced by group membership and norms.

Therefore, the third chapter of this dissertation seeks to extend work on social desirability bias to political violence. It proposes that certain groups are likely to conceal their support for political violence due their historical experience, the action of political elites, and groups norms regarding the usage of political violence. This may lead to significant underestimation of actual support for violence in the population as a whole, which is driven disproportionately by specific groups. Conversely, there are likely to be other groups with a very different history and group norms where openly expressing support for political violence is accepted or even lauded. This chapter is the first (to the author’s awareness) to use list experiments to examine support for political violence, and particularly in contemporary democracies. The findings have important academic and normative consequences for those studying political violence and

practitioners working on combating political violence, by highlighting the challenge of countering extremism amongst groups who conceal these attitudes.

1.2.3 Group identity and the effect of public displays of violence

As noted above, due to recent high profile incidents of political violence, a number of scholars have sought to understand why people come to support political violence in generally peaceful democracies (Kalmoe and Mason 2022b; Sargent 2022). However, there has been less discussion focused on how these high profile public acts of violence affect attitudes towards political violence. The classic understanding is that violence generates more violence - i.e., ‘violence begets violence’ Canetti 2017. Evidence for this can be found in the literature on civil conflict onset which identifies recent conflict as a robust predictor of future conflict, and highlights the cyclical nature of intergroup conflict (Haushofer, Biletzki, and Nancy Kanwisher 2010). Furthermore, research at a micro level on terrorist attacks shows that views become more extreme in the wake of terrorist attacks (Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014; Berrebi and Klor 2008), even increasing support for retaliatory violence (Hobfoll, Hall, Canetti-Nisim, Galea, Johnson, and Palmieri 2007), and that exposure to intractable intergroup conflict increases an ethos of conflict and reduces willingness to compromise (Canetti et al. 2017; Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, Rapaport, et al. 2016). However, much of this literature uses data collected after violence has occurred which poses challenges for establishing causality, and there is extremely limited analysis of the effect political violence has on attitudes towards political violence specifically, and even less on how this might vary across groups. This gap is due in part to the practical and ethical difficulty replicating exposure

to violence in an experimental setting, which makes it difficult to establish a clear causal relationship between the violence and any changes in attitude or behaviour.

The fourth and final chapter of this dissertation seeks to provide important new evidence on this question, and proposes that public displays of political violence are likely to have different effects on individuals depending on whether they are the in-group or out-group of those participating in the violence. It uses an unexpected event during survey design to analyse how the onset of unexpected, sustained, and violent political riots affect attitudes towards political violence. Furthermore, it also incorporates data from a list experiment to explore whether these effects are driven by true attitude change or simply revealed preferences. This chapter has a number of significant academic and normative implications. First, it uses a combination of novel experimental techniques which have not previously been used to study support for political violence. Through this it highlights and documents the important dynamic way in which people modify their private and publicly expressed preferences. These effects have been alluded to in previous research stretching back to Kuran (1997) but it has been challenging to study them at an individual level in the real world. From a normative and policy perspective, it highlights the worrying effect public acts of political violence have on attitudes, potentially leading to negative cycles of violence.

1.3 Northern Ireland

This dissertation uses Northern Ireland as a case study to explore the relationship between group identity and support for political violence. Each of the chapters further outlines the aspects of Northern Ireland's historical and current

political context which are relevant for understanding the specific analysis, but it is useful to provide a broader overview of the important details here, and outline the importance and structure of group identity in Northern Ireland clearly. Given this dissertation is focused on identity and the historical experience of groups, some understanding of the historical roots of the intergroup animosity and conflict is important.

A common question when discussing the history of intergroup conflict in Ireland is - how far back do you want to go? The next section *very* briefly dips back into the colonial conquest of Ireland four centuries ago before quickly moving on to the recent conflict and contemporary context.

1.3.1 The origins of intergroup conflict in Ireland

Northern Ireland forms part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland,⁴ and has done in some form since the Act of Union in 1801 which abolished the Irish Parliament. Although there are deeper historical roots, the clearest origin of this link between Ireland and Great Britain can be traced to the colonial conquest of Ireland by the English in the 16th century, which was latterly followed by extensive ‘planting’ of English populations into Ireland and Scots Presbyterians into Ulster (commonly known as the ‘Ulster Plantations’). Whilst the origins of the conquest of Ireland were not primarily religious, the English Reformation increased tensions between the crown in England and Irish leaders who were charged with overseeing the administration in Ireland. This would escalate further as greater numbers of Protestant English and Scots settlers moved into Ireland and clashed with the generally Catholic, Irish population. By the end of the 16th century, Ireland had been transformed from a

⁴previously known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, a difference which will be addressed below

country which was generally controlled by native Irish to one which was now dominated politically by ‘New English’ Protestants. This religious cleavage proved salient for centuries to follow, and continues to play a prominent role today.

1.3.2 The creation of Northern Ireland

Before moving on to more contemporary history from the 20th century onwards, it is important to first understand the importance of the Ulster plantations for the existence and ongoing saliency of the religious cleavage in Northern Ireland. Ireland is historically made up of four provinces – Leinster in the east, Munster in the south, Connacht in the west, and Ulster in the North. Ulster encompasses nine counties, six of which make up Northern Ireland. The Ulster plantations were the mass colonisation of the Ulster by the English crown which took place during the 16th century. The plantation involved the movement of thousands of settlers from England and Scotland to Ulster, and was sanctioned and supported by the crown. The land which they were granted had been stolen from Gaelic Chiefs, and the strategy was seen as a means of ‘pacifying’ Gaelic, Catholic Ireland, and particularly Ulster. This plantation radically changed the demographics of Ulster, from almost entirely Gaelic and Catholic to a near Protestant majority, particularly in the six counties which would eventually form Northern Ireland (Ellis 2015). In fact, the focus on Ulster was in large part due to the fact that it was rural and dominated by Catholic Gaels (Gaelic speakers) who were extremely resistant to the English Crown (Ellis 2015). Although there have been important interceding historical events and political decisions, this colonisation, and the accompanying large-scale theft of land, laid the foundations for centuries of intergroup conflict, including the most recent civil conflict. Although there was some plantation of other parts of Ireland

outside Ulster, this was much less extensive, and therefore the other provinces remained majority Catholic Gaelic.

At the time of the conquest of Ireland and Ulster plantations, Northern Ireland did not exist as a distinct political entity. To understand its roots, we must turn to the political events of the 20th century. After the conquest of Ireland and subsequent plantation, English rule in Ireland was threatened by recurrent rebellions from those seeking to free Ireland from English rule. Whilst the majority of these were led by those who identified as Catholic, there were also notable exceptions, most famously the United Irishmen who instigated the famous 1798 rebellion and were founded primarily by Protestants. Despite these exceptions, tensions between the largely Catholic Gaelic people, and generally Protestant settlers continued to increase, as Catholics were excluded from political life and suffered economically. By the end of the 19th century and start of the 20th, the push for Irish home rule or full independence from Britain increased, reaching a crescendo first through the 1916 Rising and then the War of Independence. Although the 1916 Rising was a catastrophic military failure, it laid the groundwork for the (partially) successful War of Independence (1919 – 21). It was in the interlude between these rebellions that the Irish Republican Army (IRA) first rose to prominence and ultimately served an integral role in the War of Independence.

As tensions escalated across Ireland in the early part of the 20th century and the push for Irish independence grew, there was a backlash from the Protestant dominated Ulster. Whilst the other provinces of Ireland were overwhelmingly Catholic (including the heart of British rule in Dublin, which estimates suggest was 83% Catholic), Ulster, and particularly the six counties which would ultimately form Northern Ireland, had a much larger proportion of Protestants due to the more extensive plantation of Ulster. The strength of opposition to

potential Irish independence in Ulster was made clear, first through the signing of the Ulster League and Covenant in 1911 which opposed even the prospect of Home Rule (i.e. the formation of an Irish Parliament which would oversee the affairs of Ireland but remain part of the United Kingdom), and then through the formation of the Ulster Volunteers in 1913. The Ulster Volunteers (or UVF - Ulster Volunteers Force - as they became known) were a loyalist-unionist Protestant militia formed to oppose Home Rule and latterly Irish independence. They would ultimately play a prominent role in the Northern Irish civil conflict in the latter half of the 20th century.

We can see already at this stage how multiple layers of identity became entangled and overlapping in Northern Ireland. On the one side there are those who identify as Catholic Gaelic and Irish. These traditional identities subsequently become aligned with the push for Irish independence and thus Irish nationalism and republicanism (i.e. opposition to the English and British monarchy). On the other side are those who primarily trace their roots back to the plantations, particularly the Ulster plantations, who identify as Protestant, British, and for some Ulster(men). These traditional identities became further aligned with unionism (i.e. maintaining the union between Ireland and Britain) and loyalism (loyalty to the English crown). This leads to a complex set of overlapping political, religious, national and other social identities, each of which play a related but often distinct role. These identities are reflected in Table 1.1 below.

The Irish War of Independence, led by the IRA, proved to be markedly more successful than rebellions that had gone before, and ultimately led to the first partition of Ireland into Southern Ireland and Northern Ireland through the Government of Ireland Act 1920. Although this act delegated greater political powers to Ireland, the country still remained as part of the UK and therefore

violence continued until eventually the Anglo-Irish treaty was signed in 1921. This treaty paved the way for the creation of the ‘Irish Free State’ but at the same time allowed for the continuation of Northern Ireland as part of the UK.

1.3.3 Intergroup relations in Northern Ireland

Due to the population demographics and control of political institutions, Northern Ireland quickly and unsurprisingly became a unionist-Protestant dominated apparatus, described by some as a ‘cold house’ for Catholics (O’Leary 2000). There was extensive discrimination and oppression of Catholics in all walks of life, from gerrymandering of electoral constituencies, through to limited access to social housing and exclusion from many sectors of the economy, particularly in the public sector (O’Leary 2000). This continued from the 1920s through to the late 1960s, and although civil conflict did not break out until the early 1970s, there were incidents of large scale unrest amongst the Catholic community throughout this period, including significant rioting (Coogan 2002).

Although there were attempts to ignite a conflict through the IRA’s border campaign in the late 1950s and early 1960s, this was largely unsuccessful and it was not until the civil rights movement took hold that unrest and instability gradually gave way to outright conflict. The civil rights movement was a largely Catholic nationalist movement for equal political, economic and social rights for Catholics, including basic demands such as ‘one man one vote’. The precise start of ‘The Troubles’⁵ is not materially relevant to this research but by the early 1970s it reaches the level generally considered to be a civil conflict (>25 conflict related deaths).

At this stage, the identities aligned on either side of the conflict are relatively

⁵This was the colloquial term used for the civil conflict in Northern Ireland

clear, and can be seen in the Table 1.1. For the purposes of this discussion and for the analysis, we simply refer to these as the Protestant and Catholic communities. Although this does not capture the complexity of identities and many on either side do not identify with religious identities, it serves as a useful entry point for understanding the cleavage conceptually. The dissertation explores the important differences between, and within, these communities and groups further. The table also includes the main political parties in Northern Ireland. In general, Sinn Féin and the DUP are considered the more extreme parties, whilst the SDLP and UUP are more moderate. The Alliance Party is explicitly unaligned with either community identity.

Despite various attempts to broker a peace agreement, the conflict in Northern Ireland continued until the mid-late 1990s, and resulted in over 3,500 deaths. Eventually, following extensive negotiations a comprehensive peace agreement was reached in 1998 which is known variously as The Belfast Agreement or The Good Friday Agreement (it was signed on Easter Friday). This peace agreement put in place a new political settlement which requires power sharing between the two major communities, provides amnesty for participants in the conflict, ensures that Northern Ireland shall remain part of the UK at the consent of people in Northern Ireland (i.e. a referendum is required), and provides for greater collaboration North-South (i.e. between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland) and East-West (i.e. between Northern Ireland and Great Britain).

1.3.4 Northern Ireland as a case

The Good Friday Agreement brought to an end over 25 years of civil conflict, and paved the way for what has been a largely peaceful Northern Ireland over the past 25 years, where political changes are fought for through peaceful,

	Community A (Catholic)	Community B (Protestant)
Religious Identity	Catholic	Protestant
Political Identity I	Nationalist	Unionist
Political Identity II	Republican	Loyalist
National Identity I	Irish	British
National Identity II		Northern Irish
Political Party I	Sinn Féin	DUP*
Political Party II	SDLP*	UUP*
Political Party III		Alliance Party

Table 1.1: The table displays the religious, national, and political identities associated with each community in Northern Ireland, and the main political parties. National identity II and political party III are both generally considered unaligned with either community.

*Denotes party name acronyms - the full names are Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), and Ulster Unionist Party (UUP).

political processes rather than paramilitary violence. Furthermore, Northern Ireland is also a highly educated country, with secondary school results consistently higher than those in England and Wales. In short, Northern Ireland is a highly educated country which is part of one of the oldest democracies in the world (the UK), and has sustained relative peace for the past 25 years. However, alongside this, Northern Ireland remains deeply divided along sectarian (often considered ethnic) lines. The identities outlined in Table 1.1 remain highly salient in political and social life because the political system requires a cross-community coalition which perpetuates and institutionalises identities, and extensive residential and educational segregation has persisted, despite the end of the conflict.

This combination of being highly educated, part of one of the oldest democracies in the world, and sustaining relative peace since the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, alongside the continued high salience of group identities and the

experience of intergroup conflict within living memory, makes Northern Ireland an interesting and potentially extremely relevant context in which to examine the relationship between political violence and group identity in generally peaceful established democracies. Although this dissertation does not claim that the results are universally generalizable fully, or in part, to other contexts, they shed important light on how different identities shape attitudes towards political violence, willingness to express support for political violence and how people respond to political violence.

As alluded to above, Northern Ireland has a complex array of identities aligned with the two major communities. These identities are outlined for clarity in Table 1.1 above. Furthermore, the largest political parties associated with each community are also included. Included in this table also are some identities and parties not associated clearly with either community. The first of these is Northern Irish. Although this identity has at various points been associated more with the Protestant community, it is often now viewed as a more neutral identity which can be identified with by people from both community backgrounds. The Alliance Party are also a neutral party not aligned with either community. Not included in this table are those who are often termed ‘neithers’. Neithers are those who do not identify as either unionist or nationalist (i.e. neither). They are a small but increasing segment of the population in Northern Ireland. Further detail is provided on the important differences between these identities in the chapters where they are relevant.

1.4 Overview of approach and results

The dissertation has three empirical chapters, each focusing on a different aspect of how group identity influences support for violence. As outlined above, Chap-

ter 2 is focused on analysing the importance of smaller subsets of large political identities in shaping attitudes towards political violence, whilst also considering some of the broader determinants of support for violence. Chapter 3 seeks to understand concealment of attitudes towards political violence amongst the population at large, and particularly how this varies across groups due to their historical experience and norms regarding political violence. Chapters 2 and 3 are not focused on causality, but rather correlation, and identifying the key determinants of support for violence and concealment of attitudes towards political violence. Chapter 4 has a greater focus on causality through leveraging an unexpected event during survey design to analyse the effect of violent political riots on support for violence, and particularly how this is moderated by the group identity of perpetrators and respondents.

All chapters use newly collected online survey data from Northern Ireland which was fielded March - April 2021. The online survey was run by IPSOS Mori, a polling agency who have a volunteer panel of respondents who are remunerated for taking the survey. There are important challenges regarding representativeness of online panel surveys, yet despite these challenges, they are used extensively, and research has shown that opt-in internet panels can produce estimates which are as accurate as telephone surveys and other traditional survey formats (Ansolabehere and Schaffner. 2014; Callegaro, Villar, et al. n.d.; Callegaro, Baker, et al. 2014b). Research examining outcomes across different types of survey samples, including student, nationally representative and online convenience samples have generally found few significant differences (Mullinix et al. 2016, Arechar, Gächter, and Molleman 2018, and Coppock 2018).⁶ Therefore, although the sample is not as representative as gold standard national

⁶Furthermore, unlike other online services such as MTurk or Prolific, IPSOS puts significant effort into ensuring their volunteer panels are more representative of the overall population.

social attitudes surveys, it provides a solid basis on which to explore the research questions in this dissertation. Summary statistics for the survey can be found in the appendix. Comparing this to the overall demographic profile in Northern Ireland, the panel is slightly older (the age profile is likely higher due to the survey being restricted to over 18s), more male, and has better educational attainment. These are important differences, and the analysis in each of the chapters addresses some of the potential concerns through additional models or robustness checks which seeks to mitigate the potential effects.

1.4.1 Defining and measuring political violence

Before providing an overview of the main results, it is important to outline how political violence is conceptualized in this research, and the implications of that approach. As noted above, political violence incorporates a vast array of action which varies from large scale violence against people through to destruction of property. This can be seen in section 1.2 which highlights research using a variety of different approaches to measuring political violence. The importance of how political violence is conceptualized and measured is highlighted by recent research which shows that different question wordings leads to significantly different survey responses (Westwood et al. 2022).⁷ For example, when individuals are asked about driving a car at out-group protesters, the proportion of people in the US population who feel that political violence is justified sits at around 21% of the population. However, this figure drops to 10% when respondents are asked about shooting and killing out-group partisans. Clearly, question wording matters significantly.

This research uses a broad and simple conceptualization of political violence

⁷Unfortunately, this research was published after the survey for this project was fielded. Some adaptations or additions to the approach may have been incorporated based on this, but there was no time or funding for an additional survey

asking respondents, ‘Do you support using violence to achieve political aims which are important to you and/or your community?’. The logic of this approach is to allow to allow for a broad interpretation of political violence by respondents, and is in line with much of the prior research on political violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2022a; Pape 2022). Despite this there are still clear trade-offs in allowing for this broad interpretation. On the one hand, it gives a true reflection of the upper levels of support for political violence. Although some respondents may interpret political violence as violent protest, and others interpret it as shooting opponents, both of these actions pose a threat to political stability and can destabilise intergroup relations in a post-conflict context. By allowing for a broad interpretation of political violence, rather than specifying specific types of political violence, both of these interpretations are captured in the responses. Furthermore, the simple question wording makes it easily understandable for all respondents.

However, some of these strengths can also be interpreted as weakness of using this broad definition of political violence. As noted by Westwood et al. (2022), respondents may be interpreting political violence in very different ways and therefore it is not an accurate reflection of any specific type of political violence. Therefore, it is not clear whether, for example, 9% support equates to 9% support for killing out-group partisans, destroying property, or other types of political violence. Given this ambiguity in interpretation, this figure likely represents an upper limit of potential support for more extreme acts of violence, but also a lower limit of the potential support for the least extreme acts of violence. This ambiguity has both important academic and practical implications. From an academic perspective, there is a lack of conceptual and empirical clarity in the analysis. This is problematic because different causal mechanisms may more effectively explain different types of political violence. This may also vary

across individuals and people in ways which are not clear when using a broad definition of political violence. This poses a clear challenge for replicability, generalizability and the coherence of theoretical explanations. From a practical perspective, the implications for policymakers is unclear. Combating protest violence or property damage is very different to bombs or shootings.

Despite these challenges there are some reasons why these issues are not as problematic for the research presented here. First, given Northern Ireland's relatively recent history of political violence, most people have a shared understanding of what this entails. In fact, a significant minority expressed that they, their family, or friends had direct experience of political violence as a result of the Troubles. In this context, it is likely that most interpret political violence as referring to the different types of violence used during the Troubles. This shared understanding should reduce potential issues with differences in interpretation. Second, the levels of support for political violence are not significantly different to the measurement-corrected estimates highlighted by Westwood et al. (2022). For example, they find that approximately 7% see in-group gun homicide against the out-group as justified. Given this is the most extreme type of violence measured, it suggests that the population estimate of approximately 9% found in this research is not a wild overestimation. Furthermore, there are reasons to expect levels of support for violence to be higher in Northern Ireland given the recent history of intergroup conflict, and the research which shows that exposure to violence can lead to an increase in support for violence.

Third, this paper is not primarily interested in absolute levels of support for violence, but rather differences between groups, concealed support for violence, and how support for violence is affected by violent protest. As a result, either overestimating or underestimating total population level support for violence is not as problematic for the research. There is a potential challenge if groups

interpret political violence to mean different things, and this is a possibility in certain contexts. For example, some groups may see violent protest as more legitimate (potentially more likely for Democrats in the US), whilst others believe that using guns to defend oneself or property is legitimate (potentially more likely for Republicans in the US). However, as noted, given the recent history of intergroup conflict in Northern Ireland, there is likely to be a shared understanding of what political violence entails.

Notwithstanding these caveats, the current research could have addressed some of these challenges and there are some clear recommendations for future research. First, ideally research should incorporate both broad and specific outcome variables for measuring political violence. If structured correctly this would allow researchers to get a clear estimate of overall levels of support for general political violence, but also whether there are important differences for specific types of political violence. This would also help illuminate differences between groups in how they interpret political violence and variation in support for different types of political violence. Second, research should provide both closed binary choices and likert measures, as argued by Westwood et al. (2022).

Lastly, the question offers only a binary outcome of support or opposing political violence, with no ‘don’t know’ or neutral midpoint. The motivation for taking this approach was to force respondents to choose a perspective which might help to overcome aspects of socially desirability bias against responding honestly to the question. If there was a Don’t know or neutral mid-point, respondents are likely to opt for this rather than making a difficult choice to a sensitive question. This binary outcome forces respondents to make a decision which might require deeper consideration. There are clearly drawbacks to this also. The primary issue is that it may result in response bias as respondents may feel pressured to provide an answer, even if they do not have a strong

opinion on the topic. Although this is an challenge, given the history and context in Northern Ireland, this is a question which most people have engaged with when considering politics and voting. A second potential issue with the binary outcome is that it oversimplifies a complex issue. Simplifying political violence to a simple oppose or support does not adequately engage with the complexity of views, and how people reach these position. This is clearly true, however, it does not detract from the value of having an understanding of the baseline levels of support, and particularly how this varies between different groups across society. In future research, this could be addressed by including the binary question, and then additional follow-up questions on the type of violence and the strength of support.

In summary, this research uses a simple broad measure of political violence. Although research shows that this can potentially overestimate overall levels of population support for political violence, this does not appear to be a significant problem in the results presented and there are a number of other reasons why this is not as problematic in a Northern Ireland context.

1.4.2 Chapter 2 Overview

The analysis presented in Chapter 2 relies on more detailed data on patterns of identification with different groups. Most previous research has focused only on large group identities and questions regarding support for political violence often include references to different groups in the wording (e.g., is it legitimate for X group to use violence against Y group). Both these design decisions assume that the identities chosen by authors are the most important for respondents when they think about political violence, however, this may not be the case. As a result, they may underestimate support for violence and suffer from omitted

variable bias due to not including additional important identities. In order to partially alleviate some of these challenges, the approach followed in this dissertation was to separate the question on political violence from identity, and to allow individuals to choose from a much broader range of identities. As a result, the question on political violence simply reads:

- Do you support using violence to achieve political aims which are important to you and/or your community?

As noted above, whilst there are challenges with question wording which does not specify the target group or the specific type of violence, this potentially gives a more accurate estimate of overall levels of support for violence, and allows for analysis of whether there are other identities which are more strongly associated with support for political violence. In terms of collecting identity preferences, respondents were asked the following question and then allowed to select from a long list of identities:

- Please select all the identities below which describe how you think of yourself (You can select multiple options):
- *Irish, British, Northern Irish, Nationalist, Unionist, Catholic, Protestant, Loyalist, Republican, Neither, Working class, Middle Class, Man/Woman, Husband/Wife.*

Although this list is not exhaustive, it permits respondents to choose from a much broader range than is usually offered, and because it is not linked directly to the question on political violence, relationships between identity and political violence can be analysed without any presumption on the part of the author.

This chapter finds that the strongest predictors of support for political violence are not the large group identities such as nationality, religion or political

identity which have been traditionally used to analyse support for political violence in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. The strongest predictors are instead the smaller subset or splinter identities, which in Northern Ireland are loyalist and republican. Not only are they the identities most strongly associated with support for political violence, but they have a larger effect than any other variables included in the model.

This chapter also highlights the role of exposure to political violence and (dis)engagement with the political process in shaping attitudes towards violence. A challenging finding here is that support for political violence is significantly positively correlated with greater interest in politics, which is generally seen as a normatively positive characteristic.

1.4.3 Chapter 3 Overview

Chapter 3 focuses on the propensity of certain groups to conceal their attitudes towards political violence and therefore aims to more accurately capture and analyse support for political violence. In order to do this, it relies on analysis of a list experiment, an approach used technique to elicit more accurate views on sensitive topics. Further details on the reliability of list experiments are provided in Chapter 3. The list experiment was presented early in the survey due to potential concerns around attention, and the cognitive requirements to engage properly in a list experiment. Furthermore, the list experiment was designed in such a way as to obfuscate what the sensitive topic was. This was done by including an additional potentially sensitive statement on the list of options. The list experiment included read as follows:

1. The minimum wage should be higher

2. People in same-sex relationships should be allowed to get married.⁸

3. There should be less investment in education and healthcare.

+

4. *It is acceptable to use violence to achieve important political objectives.*

One potential challenge with list experiments is if the inclusion of other statements potentially biases responses on the sensitive item of interest. This can be evaluated through additional analysis (Blair and Imai 2012). These tests are discussed in further detail in Chapter 3 and suggest that this is not concern in the design and responses here.

The primary analysis in this chapter compares how people respond in the list experiment versus the direct question, and particularly how this varies across different groups. The results show that support for political violence is one third higher when analysed through a list experiment, demonstrating that a large portion of the population in Northern Ireland conceal their views on this stigmatized attitude. This equates to an extra 60,000 people who support political violence. However, these trends are not uniform across the population. The results emphasise that this effect stems entirely from one community, the Protestant community, where we see a significant difference in responses between the direct question and list experiment for groups aligned with this community. Conversely, we see no difference in response amongst groups associated with the Catholic community. The chapter proposes that this is due to the contrasting historical experience of these groups in Northern Ireland which has led to the cultivation of different norms around the acceptability of openly supporting political violence.

⁸We included an additional sensitive statement in order to distract attention from political violence as the potentially sensitive topic. We can validate later that responses to these control statements did not bias the analysis

This chapter also explores a number of other interesting trends in the propensity to conceal true attitudes towards political violence, with clear evidence that women and older people are more likely to conceal their support for political violence. The gender finding is particularly provocative, and potentially provides an interesting companion to research showing that gender differences in support for state violence are not driven by underlying gender differences in aggressive personality (Kalmoe 2013). These findings are further contextualised through engaging with literature on perceived gender roles and masculinity, and the greater susceptibility of older people to social desirability bias.

1.4.4 Chapter 4 Overview

Chapter 4 explores the effect of high profile acts of political violence on attitudes towards political violence. In order to do so it uses an unexpected event during survey design, which has been defined as a ‘research design that exploits the occurrence of an unexpected event during the fieldwork of a public opinion survey to estimate its causal effect on a relevant outcome by comparing responses of the individuals interviewed before the event’ (Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno, and Hernández 2020).⁹ This approach has become increasingly popular in political science to explore the effect of events which are extremely difficult to study in a controlled experimental setting, and have provided important insights on the political effects of natural disasters, sporting events and political scandals (Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno, and Hernández 2020).

This chapter exploits the onset of the largest politically motivated violent riots seen since the end of the Northern Ireland conflict to explore the effect of

⁹This design relies on a number of assumptions about the distribution of respondents before and after the event occurred to ensure the inferences drawn are valid and the chapter discusses this in more detail. Although there are some minor differences found in the balance test of characteristics before and after the event, the analysis attempts to address these using a number of different approaches, and the results hold.

political violence on attitudes towards political violence. The results indicate that violent riots increase support for political violence, however, the effect stems entirely from those who are co-partisans of those rioting, and we no effect amongst out-group partisans. This chapter also uses a list experiment to explore whether the effect of the rioting actually changes preferences, or instead makes individuals more willing to express a previously stigmatized preference. The results show that the change in attitudes is driven almost completely by a change in the willingness to express a stigmatized preference rather than actual changes in attitudes.

1.5 Summary

The literature on political violence spans a broad spectrum, ranging from the onset of civil conflict and genocide, through to rioting and attitudes towards political violence. This dissertation draws broadly on all these to help inform the theoretical framework and empirical approach. The analysis is focused specifically on understanding support for political violence at an individual level, particularly in a highly educated, peaceful democracy. The first chapter is correlational, whilst the second chapter compares responses across a list experiment and direct question, and the final chapter is more focused on establishing a causal link between public acts of violence and changes in support for violence through an unexpected event during survey design. In doing so, it makes a number of methodological, empirical and normative contributions to the study of political violence. Specifically, it reconciles a mismatch in extant research by highlighting the importance of small subset identity groups as a key determinant of political violence. It is also the first research to argue that support for political violence in contemporary democracies may be un-

derestimated amongst specific groups, and uses a list experiment to prove this empirically. This chapter also uses the list experiment to show that previously documented differences in support for violence between men and women may be due to the greater propensity of women to conceal these attitudes. Lastly, it combines novel experimental techniques to show that widely covered violent riots increase support for political violence among co-partisans of those rioting, but that this effect stems from a change in expressed preferences, rather than underlying attitudes.

Although this dissertation does not focus on actual violence or participation in violence, understanding support for violence is an important precursor to these outcomes. Whether individuals themselves are ever willing to fully participate in violence, the social context in which political violence becomes more prevalent requires some level of wider acceptance. This is particularly the case where political violence takes the form of paramilitary groups who require support from the community in which they live to survive. Northern Ireland is one such example where some level of community support for political violence was important during civil conflict and continues to play an important role today.

In summary, this thesis shows the importance of group identity in shaping attitudes towards political violence in a number of complex and interacting ways. It demonstrates that:

1. Small groups, which are often subsets or splinters from large groups, are the primary sources of support for political violence
2. Approximately one third of the population in Northern Ireland is estimated to conceal their true views on political violence, and this effect is driven by specific groups and norms linked to these group identities
3. Public displays of political violence increase support for political violence,

however, this effect is concentrated amongst those who are co-partisans of the perpetrators and is driven by a change in revealed preferences

The final chapter summarises the three empirical chapters and draws together some of the key findings and implications, particularly in relation to the practical implications for policymakers, principally those combating political violence or working with communities at high risk. It also highlights some of the limitations and potential areas for future research.

2 Chapter 2: Who Supports Political Violence?

Abstract

Why do ordinary civilians in peaceful democracies support political violence? Existing research on political violence highlights the important role group identity plays in this process. However, there is a possible mismatch between the recent quantitative literature on support for political violence which generally focuses on large group identities such as nationality and ethnicity, and qualitative literature which shows how the inculcation of extreme attitudes generally occurs in small groups. This chapter seeks to reconcile these findings by focusing on small identity groups which are often subsets or splinters of larger group identities and which may be the key conduits into supporting political violence. Analysing support for political violence in contemporary Northern Ireland, this chapter shows how small identities within each community are the primary sources of support for political violence. Additional analysis also highlights that respondents with greater exposure to conflict violence have significantly higher levels of support for political violence, offering a micro-level explanation for the recurrence of civil conflict.

2.1 Introduction

In recent years a number of high profile acts of political violence have drawn attention to the threat of violent unrest in contemporary established democracies. The murder of sitting MPs in the UK, multiple plots to kidnap or kill politicians in the US, sustained politically-motivated violent rioting in Northern Ireland, France, South Africa and a number of other countries, and most notably, the Capitol Riots have all contributed to a perception that the potential for violent unrest is higher than at any point in recent memory. This alarming trend has inevitably generated interest in why individuals choose to support political violence in otherwise peaceful democratic societies. This nascent but burgeoning literature suggests that these eye-catching events are not isolated incidents, with important research indicating significant levels of support for political violence in the general population and evidence that it has increased of late (Kalmoe and Mason 2022b; Beauchamp 2021; Kleinfeld 2021; Krause 2016; Qureshi 2018; Stankov et al. 2020; Von Holdt 2013).

The theoretical basis of this literature builds on the robust existing research on conflict and rebel mobilization, highlighting the importance of a variety of individual, group and contextual factors in shaping attitudes towards political violence (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Canetti et al. 2010; Weinstein 2006; Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013; Hillesund 2015; Kalmoe and Mason 2022b; Kleinfeld 2021; Krause 2016; Qureshi 2018; Stankov et al. 2020). In particular, and echoing findings from classic research on ethnic conflict and mobilization, contemporary analysis of support for political violence in America has consistently highlighted the importance of group identity (Kalmoe and Mason 2022b). However, although group identities clearly play an influential role in extreme attitudes and behaviour, this chapter argues there are challenges with the way

support for violence is linked to large group identities, and a related disconnect in the way this relationship is conceptualized in recent quantitative studies and the qualitative literature which examines how individuals are radicalized into supporting political violence.

The first challenge is methodological. Much of the research on support for political violence explicitly mentions specific group identities when asking respondents whether they support political violence (Hayes and McAllister 2005; Kalmoe and Mason 2022b).¹ Furthermore, related questions on patterns of identification often limits the choice of groups to a narrow range of large group identities, often only those referenced in the questions on political violence. Whilst there are important reasons for clearly focusing on specific identities, it may underestimate overall levels of support for political violence, and attribute these extreme attitudes to the pre-selected large group identities, rather than other important identities, particularly smaller groups and organisations which may be key to the process of radicalization (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016; McCauley and Moskalenko 2008; Ferguson and McAuley 2020). This methodological challenge is linked to the second theoretical challenge.

As noted, existing quantitative studies on support for political violence generally focus on relatively large group identities such as partisanship or ethnicity to analyse the effect of group identity on support for political violence (Hayes and McAllister 2005; Stankov et al. 2020; Kalmoe and Mason 2022b). However, qualitative and psychological studies which trace how individuals are radicalized into political violence emphasize the importance of smaller tight-knit groups where views of members become more extreme through continued interaction over time (i.e. group polarization) and where norms can be developed which fa-

¹For example, ‘How much do you feel it is justified for X-group to use violence in advancing their political goals’

cilitate the reproduction of political violence (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008; Larson and Lewis 2018; Ferguson and McCauley 2020). These norms legitimize political violence through incentive structures (material and social) to reward those who endorse them and punish those who reject them (Littman and Paluck 2015; Berman and Laitin 2008; Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). Furthermore, these smaller groups provide important resources and help to create social distance from out-groups which ‘makes violence less aversive’ (Littman and Paluck 2015), and have ‘an organizational form that deters defection, allowing them to perpetuate high-risk activism’ (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). This combination of small group dynamics which ‘amplify identity, threat perceptions, and biases’, alongside material and social reward structures, ‘increase feelings of efficacy and engagement in violence’ (Ferguson and McCauley 2020)

Therefore, research on support for political violence in contemporary democracies which focuses on large ethno-religious, partisan or national identity groups as key determinants of support for political violence is somewhat at odds with the proposed causal mechanisms and qualitative literature on political violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2022b; Stankov et al. 2020; Hayes and McAllister 2005). This chapter seeks to reconcile this disconnect by proposing that smaller groups are key to the process of radicalization into support for political violence. Furthermore, drawing on literature on social sorting and complex overlapping identity structures (Levendusky 2009; Davis and Dunaway 2016; Mason 2018; Egan 2020), it proposes that these smaller groups are often subsets or splinters of larger social identities (such as ethnicity or religion), but that it is the smaller groups which are crucial for iterative processes of radicalization, enforcement of extreme norms, overcoming free-riding, and potential distribution of private resources which may accrue from political violence (Hoefler 2011; McCauley

and Moskalenko 2008; Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). In short, ‘*radicalization and terrorism are made possible by bringing individuals into small groups...which are linked into a larger organisation*’ (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008).

In addition to the importance of these smaller politically salient group identities, the literature on political violence suggests that there are important precursors which trigger or facilitate the transition towards smaller identity groups and political violence (Ferguson and McAuley 2020; McCauley and Moskalenko 2008). This chapter seeks to contribute to this literature by focusing two potential contributing factors: exposure to conflict violence and political (dis)engagement (Besley and Reynal-Querol 2014; Sambanis and Shayo 2013; Beber, Roessler, and Scacco 2014a).

First, drawing on literature on exposure to political violence (EPV), conflict socialization, and criminology, this chapter argues that individual variation in exposure to violence is an important determinant of support for political violence (Greenberg 2009; Bar-Tal 1998; Canetti et al. 2018). Research on conflict socialization shows that those who grow up amidst intergroup conflict develop attitudes and beliefs regarding the justness of the in-groups goals, perceived victimization, and delegitimization of opponents (Bar-Tal 1998). Furthermore, the burgeoning literature on EPV highlights the deleterious effects it can have on threat perceptions, conciliatory attitudes, support for combatants, and intergroup retaliation (Canetti et al. 2018; Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013; Zeitzoff 2014). I propose that higher levels of exposure to conflict violence will increase an individual’s willingness to support political violence.

Second, qualitative research on support for political violence has highlighted how individuals are often gradually radicalized into supporting violence when they feel that their political objectives cannot be achieved through peaceful

means (Porta 2014). Here, it is argued that this process of radicalization occurs through combined political engagement and disengagement. This political (dis)engagement framework combines two key elements. First, those who turn to political violence are likely to have disengaged from formal political processes, such as elections. Conversely, those who endorse political violence are also likely to be *intensely interested in political outcomes*.

I test this theoretical framework using data collected through a survey run in Northern Ireland in 2021. By allowing respondents to choose from a much broader and more diverse list of social identities, the effect of different identities can be disentangled, including larger group identities such as religion or nationality which have previously been associated with political violence, and smaller identity groups which are often subsets of these identities. This is particularly important in a context where there are complex overlapping identities, an increasingly common phenomenon (Levendusky 2009; Mason 2018). These identities are often used interchangeably but may have different sets of political beliefs and behaviours. Here I examine the differing effects of smaller but potentially more extreme political identities, loyalist and republican. The analysis shows that these smaller identity groups can have three to five times higher support for political violence than larger group identities which have typically been analysed. Furthermore, the analysis also shows that a high percentage of identifiers with these small groups also identify with larger groups, nationalist and unionist, emphasising the potential empirical challenges faced by previous research.

Focusing then on exposure to conflict violence and political (dis)engagement as additional triggers of support for political violence, the analysis shows that individuals who have higher levels of exposure to conflict violence have higher levels of support for political violence. Furthermore, those who have disen-

gaged from formal politics and are less likely to vote also have higher levels of support for political violence. However, crucially individuals who support violence are not apathetic and disengaged from politics, but actually there is a strong positive correlation between interest in politics and support for political violence.

This chapter provides a possible reconciliation of prior quantitative research on support for political violence and qualitative research on radicalization. In doing so, it emphasises the importance of carefully theorizing the differing role social identities play in shaping attitudes. The results also have important normative implications regarding the targeting of interventions to tackle support for political violence. In particular, rather than focusing on large social groups (such as religion or ethnicity) where the majority of members reject political violence, research and interventions should seek to identify and understand the smaller group subsets which exist within these larger groups and which are key to understanding and tackling support for political violence. The findings regarding political (dis)engagement and political violence also have important implications, suggesting that although higher levels of political interest are normatively positive, this can lead to political violence where people become disillusioned with formal political institutions.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. The first section engages with the core concepts of violence and radicalization before outlining the existing literature on the role of group identity in conflict onset and support for political violence, focusing in particular on the way in which different strands of literature conceptualize and theorize the role of group identities in the process of radicalization into political violence. It then outlines the importance of exposure to conflict violence and political (dis)engagement, before describing the empirical approach and results. The final section discusses the findings, and

highlights drawbacks of the research including potential generalizability.

2.2 Political violence and radicalization

As outlined in C1, this thesis uses a general definition and operationalization of political violence which encapsulates a broad array of political violence. Therefore, whilst patterns of violence can vary in ‘repertoire, targeting, frequency, and technique’ (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Jean Wood 2017), this research is not focused on this variation or in the specific nuances in how political violence is defined and measured. Instead, this chapter uses a simple binary definition of political violence, with the key feature in both the definition and operationalization that violence carried out in order to achieve a political objective or on behalf of a politically relevant group.² Political violence therefore includes homicide, property damage, violent protests and a range of other forms of violence. Given the history of political violence in Northern Ireland it is likely that respondents will have a shared understanding of what political violence entails. However, further explanation and justification of this approach can be found in C1.

In order to develop the theoretical framework this thesis draws primarily on political violence and civil conflict research, however, in some cases it also uses relevant literature on radicalization and extremism more broadly. Whilst these concepts are related to political violence, it is important to distinguish between them clearly and explain why research into these related concepts may help shed light on support for political violence specifically. Radicalism and radical attitudes entails advocacy and pursuit of far-reaching societal changes - i.e., *radical* changes to society (Caiani 2017). Although this can involve support

²In some contexts, identifying politically relevant groups can be challenging, however, as outlined in Northern Ireland, these groups are deeply embedded socially, and are incorporated into the political structures with enforced grand coalitions between specific political groups (i.e., nationalists and unionists).

for political violence, this is not necessarily the case, and one can hold radical attitudes and desire radical change without supporting the use of violence to achieve them. Conversely, extremism is generally understood as subversion of democratic values, and implies the acceptance (implicit and overt) of violence as a legitimate means to achieve these political objectives (Eatwell and Goodwin 2010).

Clearly, both radical attitudes and extremism are closely related to political violence, and research shows that those who hold these attitudes also support using, and participate in, political violence in order to achieve to achieve them. In particular, there is substantial evidence that 'waves of right-wing violence' are often linked to the spread of radical attitudes such as radical nationalism, prejudice, and authoritarianism (Caiani 2017; Prowe 2004). Similarly, extreme anti-refugee attitudes and membership of groups which hold these attitudes often results in violence including assault, arson, and attacks against refugee housing (Benček and Strasheim 2016). In fact, a key criticism of some of the specific research on terrorism and political violence is that it 'tends to isolate violence from the context' Porta 2009. This critique emphasises that political violence cannot be studied in isolation, but must be considered alongside the objectives and attitudes which motivate it, the context, and important historical event (Porta 2009). Therefore, in order to fully understand the causal explanations for political violence it is important to engage with the literature on extreme attitudes and radicalization also, as these explanations can help shed light on why people come to support political violence.

Furthermore, participation in political violence is often strongly influenced by attitudes related to intergroup relations, with xenophobia playing a key role (Busher 2016). Therefore, understanding patterns of identity and intergroup attitudes can help further shed light on how individuals come to support polit-

ical violence. Specifically in the context of intergroup conflict or antagonism, group members often dehumanize the out-group which makes the perpetration of violence easier and more acceptable (Caiani, Della Porta, and Wagemann 2012). This further emphasises that political violence cannot be understood in isolation from other radical attitudes and extremism. This relationship between group identity and political violence is explored further in the next section.

2.3 Groups and political violence

Group identities have long been seen as key to understanding conflict, and there is an extensive literature which identifies group dynamics as a cause of civil wars (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Fearon and Laitin 2003). This work on intergroup dynamics as a cause of civil conflict found further support in qualitative studies of individual participation in conflict, which highlighted group identity as a key social endowment for the formation of activist rebel groups and central to understanding of why “ordinary” people participate in collective violence (Weinstein 2006; Littman and Paluck 2015). More recently, this research on the role of group identity in civil conflict has been extended to support for political violence in established democracies (Kalmoe and Mason 2022b; Andrew 2008). For example, analysis of support for political violence in the US notes that partisan identity (i.e. Democratic or Republican) is associated with higher support for political violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2022b). This chapter seeks to extend this analysis and address some potential challenges.

The first minor challenge is methodological, and stems from the way in which respondents are often asked about their attitudes towards political violence. Specifically, survey questions on support for violence often reference specific identities in the question - for example, ‘How much do you feel it is

justified for X-group to use violence in advancing their political goals’ or ‘How much sympathy do you have for X paramilitary groups’. Whilst there are potentially important reasons for wording questions with specific identities included, it may lead to underestimation of overall levels of support for violence in the population or may attribute support for violence to the identities referenced in the question when other identities are more important. This is particularly challenging where there are multiple partially overlapping identities, or where some group members have splintered into smaller more radical groups - a common phenomenon in many countries with intense political or intergroup competition (Weidman 2017; Mason 2018). In these contexts, larger group identities clearly play a role in the perception of societal grievances, but the process of radicalization into political violence potentially occurs in smaller extreme groups (Littman and Paluck 2015; Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). These groups are related and even largely overlapping, so respondents may endorse political violence in these questions, and the subsequent analysis may attribute the radical attitudes to these groups when in reality the smaller groups are key to the radicalization process.

The complexity of analysing multiple identities is related to the second and potentially more important challenge, which is a possible mismatch between the empirical approach used in much of the quantitative research which relies on large group identities such as partisanship, ethnicity or nationality, and the causal mechanisms outlined in important qualitative literature on radicalization and political violence. A key challenge highlighted in the literature on conflict is the difficulty overcoming free riders - why would anyone choose to take the high risk of participating in, or even supporting, political violence when the likelihood of success is so low and they can choose instead to wait and gain from benefits if the rebellion is successful? (Collier and Hoeffler 2014). One explanation

provided to this challenge of economic rationality is that participants can get rich (private benefits) from political violence and that people are more likely to participate where they have fewer alternatives and therefore the opportunity cost is lower (Collier and Hoeffler 2014). However, as argued by Hoeffler (2011), even where there are lower opportunity costs and the possibility of private gain, rebellions are likely to start with ‘a small group of rebels...[who] face lower costs of organisation and it is more lucrative for individuals to join because the private rewards are being shared among fewer participants’. Therefore, it seems clear that even where research is focused on understanding conflict onset at a macro level that small groups are critical to the process of gradual engagement in political violence.

The importance of smaller groups is emphasised in the existing qualitative research on the formation of armed militias which highlights that the transition to political violence is not generated through larger groups or organisations, but over time within smaller identity subsets which are often linked to these larger identity groups (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008; Ferguson and McAuley 2020). Specifically, research shows that ‘radicalization and terrorism are made possible by bringing individuals into small groups’ which are ‘linked into larger organisations’ (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008). This literature argues that norms around political violence are more effectively cultivated in smaller groups, and can be more easily enforced and sanctioned. This is further emphasised in research on terrorism (Andrew 2008; Sageman 2004). One of the earliest detailed studies on jihadi extremism which examined the process of radicalization of >100 individuals into violence finds that the overwhelming majority became radicalized into violence through joining ‘small’ groups - in the words of Andrew (2008) ‘it is within small groups that individuals gradually become radicalized’ (Andrew 2008).

Furthermore, recent research on reported participation in ‘radical action’ further highlights the importance of carefully differentiating between the role of different groups and identities (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). Analysing reported participation in radical action (including violence), the authors showed that despite the perceived centrality of religion to the protracted intergroup conflict in Israel-Palestine, that there was no direct relationship between religious identity and radical action (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). The findings robustly show that membership of a smaller radical organisation ‘fully mediated the link’ between religious identity and radical action, and that there was ‘no evidence that a religious identity by itself fosters political radicalism’ (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). These results emphasise the importance of shifting focus from large dominant group identities towards smaller more radical groups which are key to the process of radicalization, and which are often subsets of these bigger identities.

This discrepancy has also been noted in related research on ethnicity and armed group formation which highlights that initial support for violence (and the relevant armed group) is typically small and vulnerable, noting that the prevalence of “small” insurgent groups has been ‘largely overlooked’ in the literature to this point (Larson and Lewis 2018). This chapter extends this challenge to existing research on the relationship between group identity and support for political violence. Specifically, existing explanations need to adequately bridge the gap between the necessity of small groups for radicalization, and empirical analysis which often relies on extremely large ethnic or partisan groups.

The challenge faced by many researchers is the complex identity structure which can emerge in most societies, particularly those with a history of ethnic conflict, but also in more ‘stable’ contexts such as the US (Levendusky 2009; Weidman 2017; Mason 2018). In these contexts, it is often difficult to differ-

entiate between larger group identities such as partisanship or ethnicity, and smaller more radical identities which exist as subsets from these groups or have partially splintered from them. Often the majority of members of the smaller groups are also members of the larger group identity or have splintered from them, and furthermore many of the political attitudes, norms and behaviours are shared between these groups. As a result, researchers often choose to focus on the larger more obvious group identities. However, there are likely to be important differences, particularly around radical views such as support for political violence.

In summary, using both the economic rationality argument or through an understanding the psychology of groups and social norms, it seems that the cultivation of more radical attitudes towards political violence emerges from smaller radical group identities rather than large social groups such as ethnicity or partisan identity. However, the existing literature on support for political violence has generally focused on large group identities such as partisan, national or religious identity, despite the important influence of small groups for the mechanisms proposed.

2.3.1 How individuals come to support political violence

Although this chapter does not trace the process by which people come to how extreme views, it is useful to think about this process in order to understand the importance of smaller groups. The process is likely quite dynamic and complex, but reviewing existing research on support for extreme views, Andrew (2008) argues that in these small, intense group settings ‘individuals gradually adopt the beliefs and faith of the group’s more extreme members...[and] the polarization experienced within the group, combined with an increased sense of

group identity and commitment, helped to radicalize individuals’. This process of ‘group polarization’ has been found in groups ranging from incels to radical religious groups and shows that repeated interaction with in-group members tends to push group members towards more extreme positions (O’Donnell and Shor 2022; Everton 2016; Thomas, McGarty, and Louis 2014; Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). Another review of the psychological literature on why “ordinary” individuals participate in collective violence suggests that the process of identification with radical groups increases willingness to perpetrate violence, and the violence in turn increases identification with the groups (Littman and Paluck 2015). These smaller groups help remove psychological obstacles normal individuals have to perpetration of violence, and ‘personal morality and group norms can be difficult to separate, because individual morality is usually anchored in some kind of group consensus’ (McCauley and Moskaleiko 2008)

This psychological transition and radicalization is facilitated by rewards and resources. Smaller groups often support members with important resources such as healthcare and education (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016), and there are further ‘social rewards for participation and social punishments for free-riding’ (McCauley and Moskaleiko 2008). The importance of incentives and punishment structures to enforce norms around political violence has been emphasised in other research also. For example, Littman and Paluck (2015) find that these social reward and sanction structures are key as political violence comes to be ‘associated with power, status, and a sense of belonging’. Those who do not endorse the radical norms may ‘be punished for their lack of action, experiencing shame and rejection’ (Littman and Paluck 2015). In fact, as discussed further in chapter 3, in these groups political violence can come to be seen as normatively good and laudable.

Lastly, in interviews with former combatants in Northern Ireland, researchers

emphasise the importance of insulation within small groups which ‘amplify identity, threat perceptions, and biases’, all of which contribute to increased engagement in political violence (Ferguson and McAuley 2020). This may also serve to create social distance from out-groups which helps to overcome aversion to violence (Littman and Paluck 2015). These explanatory mechanisms highlight the necessity of small groups for the cultivation and persistence of radical attitudes towards political violence.³

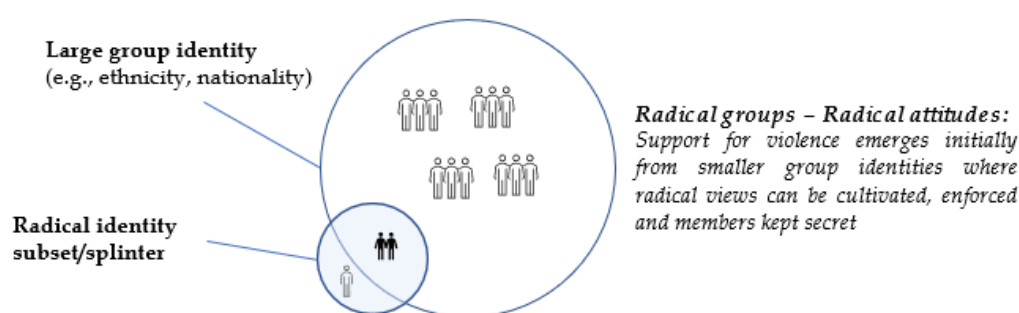


Figure 2.1: This graphic shows the relationship between larger group identities and smaller identity subsets. Whilst there may be significant overlap in members, the majority of the larger group do not identify with the smaller group and there are some in the smaller group who do not identify with the larger group

The proposed relationship between these smaller identity group subsets and larger ethnic or religious groups is illustrated in Figure 2.1. This graphic shows how the larger group identity is generally made up of individuals who do not support political violence, but that there are some members here who are also members of the smaller group where support for political violence is cultivated,

³The importance of focusing on smaller groups where individuals can be radicalized over time, or which people join due to their radical beliefs is even more important when we switch focus from countries in which there is ongoing conflict to otherwise peaceful established democracies. Whilst participating in political violence is always a risk, the likelihood of being caught and punished for this action is significantly higher in established democracies where the state and security forces are stronger and have robust judicial system to back them up. As a result, cultivating support for political violence requires smaller groups where individuals can develop higher levels of reciprocal trust through repeated interactions, and where it is more feasible to maintain secrecy, as well as, monitor and sanction deviation or betrayal.

accepted and often lauded. As illustrated, there are also individuals who identify as part of the small group subset, but who do not identify with the larger group identity. Furthermore, although it is not highlighted here, it is possible (and likely) that there are members of the larger group identity who support political violence without identifying with the smaller group, and conversely, people who are members of the smaller group who do not support political violence. Therefore, it is not that identification with this smaller group automatically entails support for political violence but that it significantly increases the likelihood that an individual will be radicalized into supporting political violence (there are likely other important aspects to this group identity beyond support for violence).

Therefore, this chapter seeks to resolve a potential mismatch between the causal micro-mechanisms specified in literature on individual participation in political violence which emphasises the importance of smaller identity groups, and the quantitative literature on conflict and support for violence which has generally focused on much larger social groups. This chapter proposes that these smaller identity groups are often contained within the large ethnic or partisan groups, or splinter from them, creating distinct group identities which allow for the cultivation and enforcement of norms around political violence.⁴ The members of these identity subsets are likely to also identify with the larger group and thus empirical analysis which only capture patterns of identification with the large group identity and not the smaller identity subsets are potentially hampered by omitted variable bias. This could result in perceived stronger relationship between the larger group identity and political violence than there exists in reality. In addition to the theoretical and empirical challenges, these explanations locate the source of violence at a much larger group, making policy

⁴Or the private reward of individuals under an economic rationality framework

implications for combating political violence more challenging to implement.

A potential example of this approach can be found in Northern Ireland where research on support for paramilitary violence has often focused on support amongst major religious (Catholic and Protestant) or political (nationalist and unionist) groups (Hayes and McAllister 2005). However, within these larger groups are smaller partially overlapping subsets and splinter groups which are likely to be the primary source of support for political violence amongst each community. In Northern Ireland, these smaller radical groups are republicans and loyalists, and are known to be closely associated with political violence; however, research to this point has often not collected identification with these groups as part of the empirical analysis, or actually mentions specific group identities in the questions on political violence (Hayes and McAllister 2005). This is despite qualitative research which clearly highlights the importance of these smaller radical identities as key for understanding ongoing political violence (Taylor 2014; McGlinchey 2019). As illustrated later in this chapter, it is important to emphasise that identifying as republican or loyalist does not necessitate support for political violence, but the likelihood of radicalization into political violence is significantly greater in these smaller groups where radical views can be cultivated and sustained through the mechanisms outlined above.

These complex structures of overlapping identities (social sorting) exist in other contexts also, such as the USA, where partisan identity has become increasingly aligned with race, education, geography and a host of other identities (Levendusky 2009; Mason 2018). Although clearly partisan identity plays a significant role in political attitudes in the US, it is plausible that the process of radicalization occurs in smaller identity groups (e.g. white supremacists) which are subsets or splinters from these partisan identities. Other examples of this include radical religious subsets where support for violence becomes accepted and

often lauded such as radical Islamic jihadist groups, where again there is often misattribution of radical attitudes to the larger religious group identity, leading to oppressive discriminatory government policy targeting these groups (Qurashi 2018). Similarly, groups of extremist white evangelical Christians which have emerged in the USA (Stanton 2022). Differentiating between these different group identities is critical to understanding and combatting radicalization.

In short, this chapter argues that understanding the relationship between group identity and political violence requires going beyond an analysis of large social identities such as ethnicity or partisanship, and focusing on smaller identity subsets and/or splinters from these groups where norms regarding political violence can be more easily cultivated and enforced. Therefore, when analysing the role of group identity in attitudes for political violence, research should identify and collect information on smaller group identities which are likely to be key to understanding support for political violence. The empirical prediction which follows is that *individuals who identify with small radical identity subsets or splinters will have much higher levels of support for political violence*. This leads to the below hypotheses for Northern Ireland, which will be further explained in the case discussion below:

H1 *Republican and loyalist identifiers will have higher levels of support for political violence than those who do not identify as republican or loyalist.*

- **H1a** Republican identifiers will have the highest level of support for political violence among all groups aligned with the nationalist community.⁵
- **H1b** Loyalist identifiers will have the highest level of support for political violence among all groups aligned with the unionist community.⁶

Although the primary focus of this chapter is social groups, it is clear that

⁵These identities include Catholics, Irish, and nationalists.

⁶These identities include Protestants, British, and unionists.

membership of a group is insufficient to generate support for political violence independently. Therefore, in this chapter I also explore two other factors which may be important for understanding why individuals support political violence but which have received limited attention in the literature thus far - direct exposure to conflict violence and political (dis)engagement.

2.4 Exposure to conflict violence

One of the most robust predictors of civil conflict onset is the occurrence of recent conflict in that same country. Explanations for the cyclical and persistent nature of conflict often rely on the damaging impact conflict has on national institutions (macro) and intergroup relations (meso) (Besley and Reynal-Querol 2014; Sambanis and Shayo 2013; Beber, Roessler, and Scacco 2014a). However, there has been comparatively less focus on the micro mechanisms by which conflict self-propagates (there are important exceptions to this, particularly focused on the Middle East, which will be discussed below (Canetti et al. 2017; Canetti 2017; Bar-Tal 2013)). Drawing on conflict socialization literature and related research on the psychological impact of exposure to violence, this chapter argues that exposure to conflict violence may also increase the potential for future conflict through its direct impact on support for political violence.

The learning and adoption of political attitudes in early life based on the context in which one grows up is known as *political socialization* (Greenberg 2009). This concept describes the process ‘by which citizens crystallize political identities, values, and behavior that remain relatively persistent throughout later life’ (Neundorf and Smets 2020). This concept has been adapted to explain the specific process of socialization which occurs in the context of intractable intergroup conflict where prolonged and continual exposure to intergroup vio-

lence leads to ‘conflict socialization’. Conflict socialization is said to encompass three primary components (Bar-Tal, Diamond, and Nasie 2017). Firstly, individuals are continually exposed to conflict related information in their environment. They are aware of events, particularly violent events, which occur in areas where they live or are discussed in their vicinity. Secondly, people are given direct instruction and information about the conflict from people they interact with. Finally, individuals may have direct personal experience of conflict. This may not necessitate violence against them but may involve family or friends experiencing violence. It also includes non-violent oppression, humiliation or restrictions on their actions which are necessary to avoid direct violence (Bar-Tal, Diamond, and Nasie 2017).

Research on Conflict socialization and related work on exposure to political violence argue that prolonged exposure to intractable conflict has a damaging effect on a range of attitudes and behaviours which persist long after intense conflict has abated (Bar-Tal 1998; Hadzic, Carlson, and Tavits 2020; Nair and Sambanis 2019). These attitudes include an ‘ethos of conflict’, increased threat perception, authoritarianism, belief in the justness of one’s goals, the delegitimization of out-groups, and reduced support for conflict resolution (Bar-Tal 1998; Tint 2010; Canetti et al. 2018; Canetti et al. 2017; Hobfoll, Canetti-Nisim, and Johnson 2006). Given perceived threat and authoritarian beliefs are associated with higher levels of support for political violence, and research also shows exposure to conflict violence increases support for combatants, this suggests that higher exposure to violence may indirectly and directly increase support for political violence (Zmigrod, Rentfrow, and Robbins 2018; Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013).

The effect of exposure to conflict is particularly strong when individuals are born into and exposed to enduring conflict during their formative years, as

conflict becomes an inseparable part of the daily lives (Bar-Tal, Diamond, and Nasie 2017). As a result of this socialization process, the experience of those who grow up in a conflict environment are ‘very different’ from those who do not, specifically those who grow up and live in the midst of intractable conflict acquire a ‘distinctive set of societal beliefs, attitudes, and emotions that provide cognitive tools for understanding their conflictual reality’ (Bar-Tal, Diamond, and Nasie 2017). These views are likely to persist throughout their lifetime, with research on the development and stability of political attitudes indicating that there is a strong correlation between attitudinal scales in early adolescents, late adolescents and young adults and that ‘distinct political cultures’ are well established and political attitudes mature ‘during the formative phase of adolescence’ (Hooghe and Wilkenfeld. 2008; Rekker et al. 2015; Nenendorf and Smets 2020). Furthermore, there is robust evidence that exposure to conflict violence hardens identity and intergroup attitudes, and that these effects can endure after migration, and even affect how individuals respond to contemporary political events, emphasising the enduring effect of conflict exposure on intergroup relations and attitudes (Canetti-Nisim et al. 2009; Canavan and Turkoglu. 2022b; Canavan and Turkoglu. 2022a).

Although research on conflict onset and socialization often focus on the effects on society as a whole, there is recent research which indicates that due to geographic variations in the level of violence during conflict, there may also be geographic variation in levels of direct exposure to violence and therefore the effect on attitudes. Specifically, Stankov et al. (2020) finds that participants living in the regions with higher levels of interethnic antagonism showed higher levels of radicalization in the years after conflict (Stankov et al. 2020). This indicates that although society as a whole can experience conflict socialization, there is likely to be significant variation in the effect based on the direct

experience of individuals during conflict, with those who have higher levels of exposure to conflict violence likely to have greater support for political violence. Furthermore, research on terrorism notes that one of the key motivating factors for those who decide to take up political violence is often ‘pain and personal loss’ further emphasising the importance of direct exposure to violence during conflict (Bloom 2005).

There is research conducted in Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine which provides some evidence for this process, highlighting that individuals who reported higher levels of exposure to violence reported significantly higher levels of distress and threat, are less likely to report conciliatory attitudes, and have more sympathy for paramilitaries (Canetti et al. 2018; Hayes and McAllister 2005). As noted above, perceived threat and psychological distress are associated with higher levels of support for political violence (Beller and Kröger 2018; Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016), which provides further evidence of the link between exposure to violence and support for political violence in these context. Interestingly, additional research conducted in Israel shows that individuals with higher levels of exposure to political violence have higher levels of negative reciprocity (i.e. willingness to respond to perceived provocation), suggesting that the effect of exposure to violence on violent attitudes may provide a micro-level mechanism for the negative cycles of violence which emerge in many countries which experience intergroup and civil conflict (Zeitzoff 2014).

Therefore, building on these findings regarding the recurrence of civil conflict, conflict socialization, and exposure to political violence, this chapter argues that exposure to intergroup conflict creates a more permissive attitude towards the legitimacy of political violence. Specifically individuals who have higher levels of exposure to conflict violence are more likely to support political violence. These higher levels of support for political violence provide an

explanatory mechanism at the micro-level for the recurrence of civil conflict.

H2 - Conflict exposure: *Respondents who have a higher levels of direct exposure to conflict violence will have higher levels of support for political violence.*

2.5 Political (dis)engagement

Many of the micro-level explanations for political violence do not rely on overtly political factors. Although civil conflict research has noted the importance of state weakness and political exclusion, explanations for individual participation in conflict have often focused on personality traits, economic circumstances, opportunity cost or intergroup relations, and some even dismiss political cleavages as a motivation for all but the political elites engaged in conflict (Kalyvas 2008; Rustad 2016; Weinstein 2006; Miodownik and Nir. 2016; Kalmoe and Mason 2022b). This chapter focuses on a potentially important political precursor of support for political violence. Specifically, this chapter proposes a combined engagement - disengagement dichotomy in the relationship between an individual's political involvement and support for political violence. In short, individuals are more likely to turn to political violence when they become disillusioned and disengaged in the formal political process, however, rather than being uninterested in political violence, those who turn to violence are likely to be intensely invested in political outcomes and therefore have disproportionately high interest in politics.

A common difference between contexts in which there is conflict versus peaceful political competition is the effective functioning of political institutions; it is now well established that there is an increased risk of civil conflict in anocracies (Regan and Bell 2010; Jones and Lupu 2018). The explanations

for this finding are varied but many attribute it to widespread disillusionment with the ineffectiveness of a half-formed political process and weak institutions, and the concurrent inability of these same weak regimes to sufficiently suppress violence (Regan and Bell 2010; Hegre et al. 2001; Muller and Weede 1990). Whilst analysis of the relationship between polity and civil conflict onset relies on national level measures of polity, the logic can be mirrored at an individual level. Although disillusionment will be more common in contexts with more dysfunctional institutions, it is likely that individuals' subjective perception of institutions will affect their willingness to support political violence also.

The presence of effective peaceful political channels for challenging and changing society is a key outlet and release valve for individuals who are dissatisfied with the current situation. In most democratic countries, those who believe the current social and economic relations are inequitable will pursue change through peaceful democratic processes, rather than through political violence. However, the mere presence of these institutions is not sufficient. As noted by Dyrstad and Hillesund (2020) 'Democratic institutions in and of themselves are not sufficient to ensure peaceful contention' and even in democratic societies political violence can come to be seen as legitimate 'if peaceful means of influencing politics are seen as inefficient or nonexistent'. As a result, individuals who become sufficiently disillusioned with the political process may turn to other avenues for change. Evidence for this effect has been found in recent research on radical attitudes, with individuals who feel that politicians are just 'out to get their vote' rather than actually caring about their opinion (i.e. a measure of political efficacy) are more likely to support some forms political violence (Dyrstad and Hillesund 2020). The logic of this argument hews closely to that made for the relationship between polity and conflict at a national level outlined above - that partially developed and ineffective political institutions in

anocracies increase the risk of conflict.

Whilst this relationship between perception of politicians and extremist attitudes is important and instructive, this chapter proposes that the theoretical framework and empirical approach can be extended further. Firstly, whilst perceived political efficacy provides a useful insight into people's beliefs about the political system, this may not be reflected in their actual behaviour and actions - this is often referred to as the 'attitudes-action' gap or the 'principle-implementation' gap (Dixon, Durrheim, and Thomae 2017; Newton and Meyer 2013). As a result, measuring perceived political efficacy may not adequately capture the action and behaviour of respondents. A potential way to overcome this is to directly measure the behaviour of interest, or ask respondents about their behaviour rather than attitudes. The behavioural extension of low political efficacy is voting behaviour - if someone believes that politicians do not care about their opinion and they can have no impact on political outcomes, they are unlikely to vote. Voting behaviour, rather than a less precise concept such as political efficacy, is likely to be a more accurate measure of an individual's belief in their ability to influence the political system and their perception of the capacity of political institutions to bring about change. Those who have lost faith in the possibility of effecting change through the political system are less likely to vote - they have disengaged in formal political processes, and may instead turn to informal radical options, such as political violence.

Building on the link between political efficacy and support for political violence, it is likely that individuals who become increasingly dissatisfied with the potential for change through peaceful democratic means will be radicalised away from political change through voting and turn instead to political violence. There is some evidence for this process occurring at an individual level in the qualitative literature on radicalization. In particular, Porta (2014) traces the

radicalization process of eventual IRA militants in Northern Ireland, showing how many of those who became radicalized were initially involved in the peaceful civil rights movements. This movement attempted to channel dissatisfaction with society into peaceful protests and resulted in the founding of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP).⁷ However, when the peaceful protests were met with state violence, many concluded that the political institutions were not fit for purpose nor open to change, and turned to political violence. It was only after people concluded that they could not achieve change through political processes and peaceful protests did they become radicalized into political violence (Porta 2014). In summary, if people believe change cannot be achieved through formal political processes (primarily voting), they are more likely to turn to political violence to achieve political objectives.

H3 - Political attitudes: *Respondents who are less likely to vote will have higher levels of support for political violence*

However, it is not inevitable that those who lose faith in the political system will turn to political violence. In fact, the mainstream perception of those who do not vote is that they are disinterested in politics and apathetic about the outcomes. And there is evidence that interest in politics is a significant determinant of likelihood of voting (McClurg 2003). Therefore, this chapter argues that there is a second component of political attitudes which is potentially important in catalysing the turn towards political violence - interest in politics.

Support for political violence is a radical position and one which is unlikely to have been adopted lightly. In fact, radical behaviour is ‘rarely adopted overnight’, but rather requires intense commitment and belief in a cause, alongside a deep interest in political outcomes (Porta 2014). Therefore, contrary to

⁷In fact, the specific goal of the SDLP was to break with traditional nationalist abstentionism from political institutions in Northern Ireland and to fight for civil rights within Stormont (i.e. the Northern Irish parliament) (Campbell 2013)

some mainstream depictions of those who participate in conflict as ‘mindless thugs’ who have little interest in society and fellow citizens, individuals who turn to political violence are likely to have done so after intense consideration and due to deep interest in the political outcomes they are fighting for.⁸

Not only is the expectation that those who are willing to support extreme action to achieve political objectives likely to have deep interest in political outcomes but there is also evidence for it in qualitative literature on armed groups. The classic work on participation in civil conflict by Humphreys and Weinstein (2008) found that the overwhelming majority (70%) of those volunteered to fight for the Civil Defence Forces in Sierra Leone did so because they ‘supported the group’s political goals’ (Weinstein 2006). Not only was this an important factor for the majority of participants but no other single motivating factor came close. Furthermore, related research on who becomes a terrorist emphasises that, ‘like members of other political groups’, those who joined rebel groups or participate in terrorism are ‘those who have acquired information about the political process, are connected to politicized social networks, and are able to devote time and energy to political involvement’ (Lee 2011). Clearly those who become involved in radical political action, such as terrorism or other forms of political violence are intensely interested in political outcomes.

Lastly, it is important to note here that this argument is nonideological, and therefore is unrelated to whether an individual is ideologically left-wing or right-wing, or whether they align themselves with a particular party. It is simply a measure of their interest in politics and political outcomes and does not challenge recent findings that there is no relationship between ideology and support for political violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2022b). An individual may

⁸This does not necessarily mean that their attitudes and opinions are accurate or well-founded, but rather that they have been reached through intense interest and thought invested in the outcome

be left-wing and have a high or low interest in politics, or right-wing and have a high or low interest in politics. In summary, individuals who support political violence are likely to have atypically high interest in politics.

H4 - Political attitudes: *Respondents who have greater interest in politics will have higher levels of support for political violence*

2.6 Political violence in Northern Ireland

This chapter tests the proposed explanations for variation in support for political violence across the population in Northern Ireland. A detailed explanation of the historical and contemporary political situation in Northern Ireland is outlined in chapter 1, but it is important to re-emphasise a number of important details for the analysis in this chapter. As part of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland is located in one of the oldest democracies in the world. Despite this, due to political and social tensions, Northern Ireland erupted into sectarian violence between Catholics and Protestants in 1971, continuing until 1991 at a severity level which meets the traditional definition of a civil conflict of ≥ 25 battle deaths per year.⁹ The causes of the conflict are complex, but many identify the violent oppression of the peaceful Northern Ireland civil rights movement as a key catalyst. The violent response to the civil rights movement led to an escalation of violence from paramilitary groups and the state.¹⁰ In 1994 a ceasefire was declared and the Good Friday Agreement was signed 1998 bringing an end to almost 30 years of conflict. Since this point, Northern Ireland has remained largely peaceful, with all major political actors accepting

⁹Many date the violence back to 1968, however, in 1971, it meets the criteria of civil conflict according to UCDP/PRIO (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, et al. 2002).

¹⁰This is a radically simplified version of a complex conflict which has multiple actors on either side

that change should be achieved through peaceful democratic methods.¹¹

The Northern Ireland conflict involves multiple layers of identity which are often simplified to Catholic Irish nationalists and Protestant British unionists.¹² However, there are important additional identities which are potentially relevant for understanding sources of support for political violence. As argued earlier, the shift towards political violence often occurs initially in small subsets of larger identity groups, and this chapter proposes that Northern Ireland is a prime example of this. Whilst the major identity groups in Northern Ireland are Catholic Irish nationalist versus Protestant British unionists, there were additional smaller and more radical group identities on both sides which played a key role in the conflict, particularly in relation to political violence.

On the nationalist side of the conflict are those who identify as republican. Their origin derives from historical movements in Ireland to remove the English Monarch as the head of state (hence the name republican), and latterly political movements for reunification and Irish independence (Coogan 2002). Republicanism is not a uniquely Irish ideology, and there are many republicans across the UK (including Northern Ireland) who believe that society would be better without a hereditary monarchy but do not believe this should be achieved through violence. However, in Ireland and Northern Ireland republican identity has important historical roots and entails a distinct set of attitudes and behaviour which are important to understand. In particular, there is a close link between republicanism, violent rebellion, and political violence. In Ireland, republicans are primarily understood as a more radical nationalist subset, or

¹¹It is worth noting here that there continues to be a threat of political violence from dissidents on both sides

¹²The Good Friday Agreement actually allows people born in Northern Ireland to legally opt to be 'Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose' (GFA, constitutional issues, section I para. vi). This unique legal framework provides a potentially more flexible context for patterns of national identification.

splinter group, who have close ties to violent militant groups fighting for the reunification of Ireland (McGlinchey 2019). This chapter shows that although a majority of republicans also identify as nationalist, republicans make-up a very small minority of nationalists. Rather than grouping these two identities together it is important to understand why individuals choose to identify as republican and the potential impact this would have on their political attitudes and behaviour.

For republicans, the link between republican identity and political violence can be seen in the name of the largest armed militant group on the nationalist side, the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Furthermore, the modifier ‘republican’ has been used by political parties who wish to differentiate themselves from other groups they deem as insufficiently radical in the pursuit of Irish independence. One clear example are ‘Republican Sinn Féin’ who claim to be the true heirs of the party formed in Ireland in 1905. An important point of differentiation between Republican Sinn Féin (RSF) and Sinn Féin is the continued assertion by RSF that they have the right to use militant means to defend the Irish republic. These associations between groups who use the term republican and political violence emphasises the link between this group identity and political violence, despite the fact that violence is not inherent to republicanism. This is distinct from larger group identities, such as nationalist or Catholic, which are much larger and often seen as key to understanding political violence, but may not actually be associated with extremism.

Similarly, on the unionist side of the conflict there is a smaller group identity who also identify as loyalist. Loyalism is often seen as a stronger form of Northern Irish ethnonationalism which is loyal to the Protestant monarchy, rather than political institutions, and has been described as ‘a variation of British nationalism’ (McGarry and O’Leary 1995). Loyalists have often been perceived

as more extreme, often working class, Protestants who are deeply embedded in cultural traditions such as the Orange Order which celebrate the history of protestants and the British monarchy in Ireland and Northern Ireland (Bruce 2001; Bruce 1992). As with republicanism, loyalism has often been associated with armed groups on the unionist side of the Northern Irish conflict (Bruce 1992).¹³

Given the complex layered nature of identity, those who identify as republican generally, although not entirely, identify as nationalist, Irish, and to a lesser extent, Catholic.¹⁴ Similarly, those who identify as loyalist generally also identify as unionist, British, and to a lesser extent, Protestant. As a result, research which analyses support for political violence which focuses on these larger group identities but does not analyse the importance of republican and loyalist identity might suffer from omitted variable bias (Hayes and McAllister 2005). For example, Hayes and McAllister (2005) use survey data which asks respondents if they have sympathy for ‘republican’ or ‘loyalist’ paramilitary violence, but does not collect whether respondents identify as republican or loyalist, and then analyses the responses through the lens of religious identity. Whilst there are clearly important reasons to distinguish the source of political violence, this approach presupposes the identities which are important to respondents in relation to political violence, and takes these identities and their

¹³The link between loyalism, working class Protestants, and paramilitary violence can be seen in the action taken to collapse the Northern Irish parliament after an agreement was reached in 1972 to restore the institutions under a new power sharing agreement which would force the previously unionist government state to share power with nationalists (Anderson 1994). During this period, loyalist hardliners used paramilitary blockades to stop anyone attending work during a strike coordinated with trade unions, which were Protestant dominated (Anderson 1994). Although the strike didn’t initially have widespread support in the Protestant community, the extreme action of loyalist paramilitaries and the incompetent response of the British government ultimately resulted in large scale strikes which crippled Northern Ireland and collapsed the assembly. The key actors in precipitating the collapse were not leading unionist politicians (although there were some outspoken critics of the power-sharing agreement alongside those who signed up), but more extreme loyalists.

¹⁴Militant Irish republicanism has a strong leftist contingent who are Marxist and atheist

support for violence as given rather than actually exploring the relationship. Therefore, although this work provides an important insight into exposure to conflict violence and support for violence at a critical period in the Northern Irish conflict, there are a number of important gaps. As noted above, this is potentially a challenge in other contexts where there are multiple overlapping identity groups.

This chapter proposes that republican and loyalist are the small radical group subsets of their respective communities through which support for political violence is cultivated and sustained. Unlike large political (nationalist / unionist), religious (Catholic / Protestant) or national (Irish / British) identity groups they are small enough for group norms and economic rationality mechanisms identified in the theory above to operate. Specifically, they are small enough that group norms around political violence are developed and enforced, and potential deviations from this norm or information sharing with authorities can be sanctioned. Therefore, as outlined above, *Republican and loyalist identifiers will have higher levels of support for political violence than those who do not identify as republican or loyalist (H1)*. Furthermore, *republican and loyalist identifiers with have the highest levels of support for violence relative to other groups aligned with their community (H1a-b)*.

2.6.1 Data and methodology

These hypotheses were tested through a survey conducted in Northern Ireland in early 2021.¹⁵ Northern Ireland provides an ideal context in which to test these explanations as it has a number of clearly defined group identities which are institutionalised and politicised. Furthermore, as noted above, although it is part of a deeply embedded democracy it suffered from a domestic civil

¹⁵Further information on the survey can be found in the introduction and appendix.

conflict until the mid-1990s, therefore there is a relatively high portion of the population who have varied exposure to conflict violence, alongside a significant portion who have no experience of violent conflict at all.

The survey included questions on a range of important group identities, political attitudes, and experience of conflict violence. Specifically, with regards to group identities, respondents could choose from a broad range of identities including all relevant political, religious and national identities alongside other social identities such as gender, class, ethnicity, and being a parent, amongst others. This allows us to compare the effect of identifying as a loyalist or republican compared to more mainstream identities often analysed in Northern Ireland. The full text of the question is included below:

- Please select all the identities below which describe how you think of yourself (You can select multiple options):
- *Irish, British, Northern Irish, Nationalist, Unionist, Catholic, Protestant, Loyalist, Republican, Working class, Middle Class, Man/Woman, Husband/Wife.*

In terms of political (dis)engagement, respondents were asked whether they are likely to vote in subsequent elections and what their level of interest in politics was. The political interest question followed typical formulations of this question reading, ‘How interested are you in politics?’. Respondents had four options, ‘*Not at all interested; A little interested; Somewhat interested; Very interested.*’. Similarly the voting behaviour question follow typical formulations, ‘How likely are you to vote in the next general election’. Again, respondents had four options, *Very unlikely; Fairly unlikely; Fairly likely; Very likely.*

In terms of variation in violent conflict exposure, respondents were also asked whether they had direct personal or family exposure to conflict violence. This

question read, ‘Did you or your family experience any violence as a result of the Troubles in Northern Ireland?’, with a simple Yes/No response option. Alongside these variables, the survey captured a range of additional demographic data, grievances, and, as noted above, a broad range of additional group identities. These are used as controls in a number of models outlined below.

Support for political violence is measured by a clear, direct question - ‘Do you support using violence to achieve political aims which are very important to you and/or your community?’. The wording of this question is important as political violence is not clearly associated with any group identity. The outcome is a binary Yes / No, and therefore the primary models presented use logistic regression with robust standard errors.¹⁶

2.7 Results

Before moving onto the regression analysis, it is useful to look at the overall level of support for political violence in Northern Ireland and across specific demographic groups; this is shown in Table 2.1. Here we can see that overall support for political violence is relatively low but still concerning, with 9% of people saying that they support using violence to achieve important political objectives. This number is similar to recent research on support for political violence in the USA (Kalmoe and Mason 2019), indicating that despite Northern Ireland experiencing low-level civil conflict until the early 1990s, the levels of support for political violence are similar to other established democracies.

We can also look at support for political violence amongst specific demographic groups. The data in Table 2.1 shows that the only demographic group where there seems to be significant variation in levels of support for political violence is gender, with men having significantly higher levels of support for

¹⁶Tables with the full results and standard errors can be found in the Appendix.

Table 2.1: Support for political violence in the Northern Ireland across different demographics. These numbers indicate the percentage of the group specified which support violence

Group	Support for violence (%)
All	0.09 (0.01)
Female	0.04 (0.01)
Male	0.13 (0.01)
University	0.08 (0.01)
No University	0.10 (0.01)
Income<Median	0.10 (0.01)
Income>Median	0.08 (0.01)
Age<Median	0.10 (0.01)
Age>Median	0.08 (0.01)
Employed	0.09 (0.01)
Unemployed	0.09 (0.01)

political violence than women. This fits with existing research which shows that women have lower levels of support for political violence and a well established set of evidence from various disciplines showing men are associated with a range of violent and extreme behaviours (Dyrstad and Hillesund 2020; Andrew 2008).¹⁷ There are minor differences for age and education, with those who went university and older people showing less support for political violence, however, these differences are not significant using t-tests to compare difference in means.

Moving on from demographic variables, Table 2.2 shows the level of support amongst some of the important political, religious and national identities in Northern Ireland. There are a number of interesting trends here, but the clearest is the markedly higher levels of support among those who identify as loyalist and republican. As predicted by H1, these smaller group subsets support political violence at a higher rate than any other group identity. The differences are surprisingly large, with almost half of those who identify as loyalist supporting

¹⁷Interestingly, there is research which finds no difference between men and women in levels of aggressive personality which we will return to in more detail in chapter 3 (Kalmoe 2013)

Table 2.2: Support for political violence across different political, social, and religious groups. These numbers indicate the percentage of the group specified which support violence

Group	Support for violence (%)
All	0.09 (0.01)
<i>Political Identity</i>	
Unionist	0.12 (0.01)
Nationalist	0.10 (0.01)
Neither	0.04 (0.01)
<i>Religious Identity</i>	
Protestant	0.11 (0.01)
Catholic	0.08 (0.01)
<i>National Identity</i>	
British	0.13 (0.02)
Irish	0.08 (0.01)
<i>Other</i>	
Loyalist	0.45 (0.05)
Republican	0.27 (0.05)
Unionist excl. loyalist	0.07 (0.01)
Nationalist excl. republican	0.08 (0.01)

the use of violence to achieve political objectives, and a quarter of those who identify as republican feeling the same. These values are nearly four and three times higher than unionist and nationalist levels of support for violence respectively. It is notable that although these are extremely high levels of support for political violence compared to the rest of the population, neither reaches a majority. This indicates that these identities are not inextricable from paramilitary groups or political violence but do significantly increase the risk and likelihood of supporting political violence. This provides initial evidence to support H1 that support for political violence is concentrated primarily in radical identity subsets rather than in larger group identities.

As noted, an important aspect of the proposed extension to previous literature is that it is small group identities which are often contained within large group identities, such as ethnicity or nationality, that are primarily responsible

for higher levels of support for political violence. Applying this to Northern Ireland, we would expect that those who identify as republican and loyalist are also highly likely to identify as nationalist and unionist. The consequence of this is that previous analysis which did not collect data on republican and loyalist identity, and only used the mainstream large political identities to analyse support for violence, may overestimate the importance of these larger groups in determining support for political violence. Therefore, before moving on to the main results it is worth examining the relationship between these smaller groups and the larger groups.

For this we are interested in the percentage of those who identify both with the more radical as well as with the more mainstream group. The analysis is presented in Table 2.3. We can see here that 91% of those who identify as republican also identify as nationalist, and 94% of those who identify as loyalist also identify as unionist. Clearly if data on republican and loyalist identities was not collected and therefore omitted from the analysis, any effect would be almost entirely attributed to these larger identity groups. Furthermore, it is clear that only a minority of nationalists and unionists also identify as republican and loyalist, with 16% of nationalists identifying as republican, and 12% of unionists identifying as loyalist. The population structure and overlap between these groups is displayed in Figure 2.2. It is clear from this that one could potentially attribute support for violence to these larger groups rather than smaller radical groups if full information is not collected.

Table 2.3: Percentage of radical group identifiers who also identify with larger group identity

Radical identity relationship	
<i>Republican-Nationalist</i>	91%
<i>Loyalist-Unionist</i>	94%

Next, we can look at baseline levels of support for violence amongst those

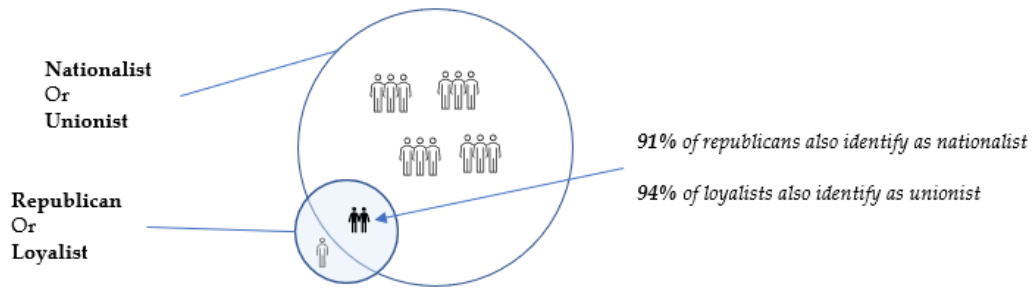


Figure 2.2: The relationship between nationalist and republican identity, and unionist and loyalist identity

with high levels of conflict exposure compared to those who have no or limited exposure. The results are presented in Table 2.4 and highlight the large difference in levels of support for violence depending on an individuals exposure to conflict violence. For those with a low levels of exposure to conflict violence only 3% support using violence to achieve political objectives, however, this jumps to 14% amongst those who have a high level of exposure to conflict violence. This initial analysis provides tentative support for **H2**.

Table 2.4: Support for political violence by conflict experience

	Support for violence (%)
All	0.09 (0.01)
<i>Low conflict exposure</i>	0.03 (0.01)
<i>High conflict exposure</i>	0.14 (0.01)

Lastly, we can also look at the baseline levels of support for violence amongst varying levels of political interest and voting likelihood. Based on the theory outlined above, we would expect those with higher levels of political interest to have higher levels of support for political violence. We can see the results are presented in Table 2.5 and show a clear pattern of increasing support as political interest increases. The scale here is from 1 (low interest) to 4 (high interest). The increase here is clear and consistent with those who have least interest in politics (i.e. 1) having extremely low levels of support for political violence at 3% of the population, which increases as interest increases and more

than quadruples to 13% for those with highest interest in politics (i.e. 4). For likely voting, the theory outlined above suggests that those who are less likely to vote would have higher levels of support for political violence. The pattern here is less clear, although still provides some support for the hypothesis outlined. For those with the lower likelihood of voting (i.e. 1 and 2), support for violence is 11% and 14%, whilst for those with higher support for violence it is only 4% and 10%, although this effect is not straightforwardly linear.

Table 2.5: Support for political violence by political (dis)engagement

	Support for violence (%)
All	0.09 (0.01)
Political Interest (1)	0.03 (0.01)
Political Interest (2)	0.08 (0.01)
Political Interest (3)	0.11 (0.02)
Political Interest (4)	0.13 (0.02)
Likely Vote (1)	0.11 (0.02)
Likely Vote (2)	0.14 (0.03)
Likely Vote (3)	0.04 (0.01)
Likely Vote (4)	0.10 (0.01)

2.7.1 Group identities

Although the above analysis provides some evidence to support the hypotheses, they only show basic levels of support without controlling for a range of other potentially important variables. Here we present a number of regression models. This includes simpler models focused on the impact of different identities, exposure to violence, and political attitudes, and then a combined model. The importance of running simpler models in addition to more complex models with additional controls has been emphasised by recent research which shows that regression models which include too many controls can ‘result in estimates that are more biased than uncontrolled estimates’ (Wysocki, Lawson, and Rhemtulla

2022). Given the dependent variable, support for political violence, is binary, the results presented use logistic regression with robust standard errors.¹⁸

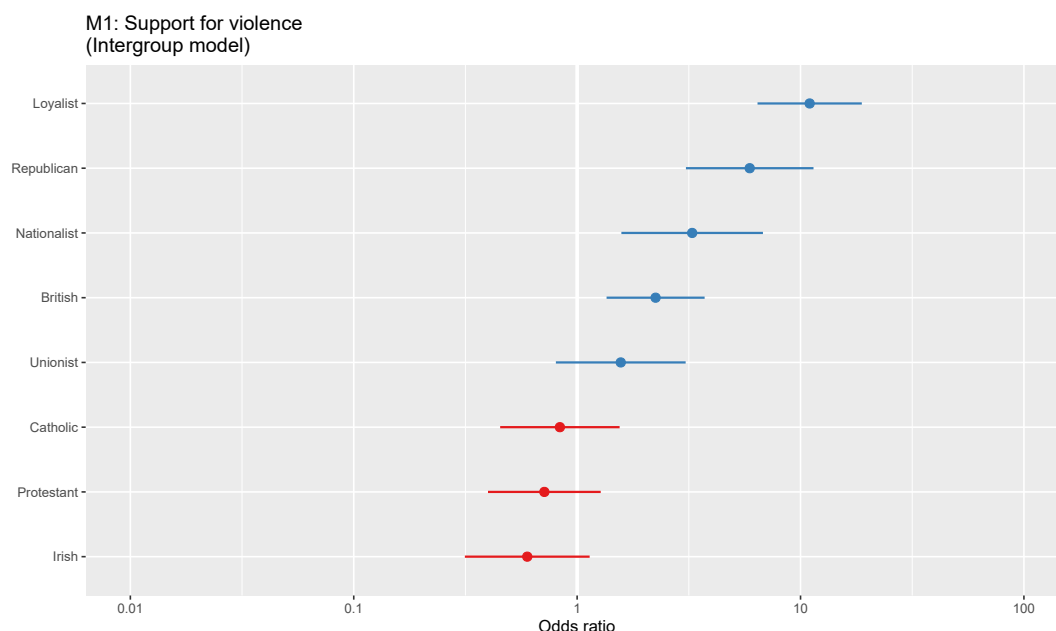


Figure 2.3: This graph displays the effect of different group identities on support for political violence. 95% confidence intervals displayed. Blue indicates positive effect, red negative.

The first model focuses on the impact of various important social identities on support for violence. As noted earlier, the survey allowed respondents to choose from a long list of identities which included religious, political, national and a range of other important identities. This model includes the three main identities generally collected for each community, and also republican and loyalist, the more radical smaller identity groups. The regression results for various group identities is presented in Figure 2.3. They support H1, showing smaller radical identities, republican and loyalist, are stronger predictors of support for political violence. Unlike the different effects of national, religious and political identities across communities, the effect of these identities is clear and consistent across both Protestant Catholic communities. Furthermore, the size

¹⁸The same analysis using linear regression for the combined models is presented for in the appendix and the results do not differ significantly.

of the effect is striking - identifying as a loyalist makes individuals 10x more likely to express support for political violence, whilst identifying as a republican makes individuals almost 8x more likely to express support for political violence. These results highlight the importance of capturing the small radical identity subsets where support for political violence can be cultivated and norms around political violence can be enforced.

Despite the perceived centrality of religion to the conflict for some, and its importance in prior analysis, these results find that religion has a negative effect on support for violence, although this is not significant. The lack of a direct effect of religion on support for political violence is in line with recent research which finds no direct effect of religion on radical action (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). In terms of the remaining identities, we can see differences in the way the remaining national and political identities operate across the two communities. On the Catholic side, we can see that nationalist identity is associated with higher levels of support for political violence, whilst Irish identity has a negative impact on support for violence, although insignificant. On the Protestant unionist side, we can see that the national identity, British, is positive and significantly correlated with higher support for violence whilst unionist identity is insignificant.

This chapter argues that including the small identity groups in the theory and data will give greater clarity and explanatory value to the analysis. However, it is not immediately apparent what this additional component contributes without a comparison. Therefore, before moving onto the additional analysis, we can compare the results with and without the smaller subset identity groups. This comparison is presented in Table 2.4 which shows the analysis with (Model 1) and without (Model 2) the smaller identity groups. One simple way to compare these models are the goodness of fit measures. In Table 2.4 we present two

Table 2.6: Logistic regression for the effect of social identities on support for political violence. Model 1 includes smaller subset identities, Model 2 does not.

	(1)	(2)
Loyalist	2.40*** (0.27)	
Republican	1.78*** (0.35)	
Unionist	0.45 (0.32)	0.81*** (0.30)
Nationalist	1.19*** (0.44)	1.48*** (0.41)
British	0.81*** (0.24)	0.81*** (0.23)
Irish	-0.51 (0.35)	-0.18 (0.30)
Catholic	-0.18 (0.36)	-0.31 (0.35)
Protestant	-0.34 (0.29)	-0.14 (0.26)
Constant	-3.31*** (0.28)	-3.27*** (0.28)
Observations	1575	1575
AIC	839.33	933.49
Log-Likelihood	-410.66	-459.74
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

measures, the Akaike information criterion (AIC) and the log-likelihood value. For each of these we can see that Model 1, with the smaller identity groups, performs better with a lower AIC value and higher log-likelihood. Each of these suggest that model 1 is a better fit to the data. Therefore, from a purely empirical perspective, including these identities in the analysis provides greater explanatory value.

From a substantive perspective, there are potentially more important implications. The first and most significant is the differing apparent impact of

unionist identity. In Model 1, with the smaller group identities included, it is not significant and the effect is relatively weak. However, when we remove the smaller identities, particularly loyalist, we can see that the effect doubles and is highly significant at the <0.001 level. Therefore, if loyalist identity was not be included in the model, it would appear that unionist identity is associated with higher support for political violence, when in fact this perceived effect is stemming entirely from loyalist group identity. The effect is not as great for the other major community, where although nationalist identity is significant in both models, the coefficient is larger when republican identity is excluded.

2.7.2 Conflict violence and politics

Turning then to the effects of exposure to violence. The model also includes a range of other demographic variables such as age and gender to control for the likelihood that people of different genders, generations or education are socialized into certain behaviour or attitudes (Bengtson 1975; Stockard 2006; Weidman 2006). The results here again show a clear pattern and provide strong support for H2 - individuals with higher levels of exposure to conflict violence have significantly higher levels of support for political violence. Again, the effect here is striking, with those who have high levels of exposure to conflict violence are almost seven times more likely to express support for using violence to achieve political objectives. Interestingly, we can see here that age is negatively correlated with support for political violence. This suggests that older people who lived through the Troubles but were not directly exposed to conflict violence actually have lower levels of support for political violence. Similarly, women have lower levels of support for political violence, a finding which is in line with existing research on support for political violence and other violent behaviours.

In terms of political (dis)engagement, the two primary variables of interest are likelihood of voting in the next general election and interest in politics. The survey also collected a range of general and specific political attitudes which are included in the model. These include how respondents voted in the Brexit referendum, confidence in political institutions, and the respondents perception of political and economic outcomes over the past five years. The results are presented in Figure 2.4.

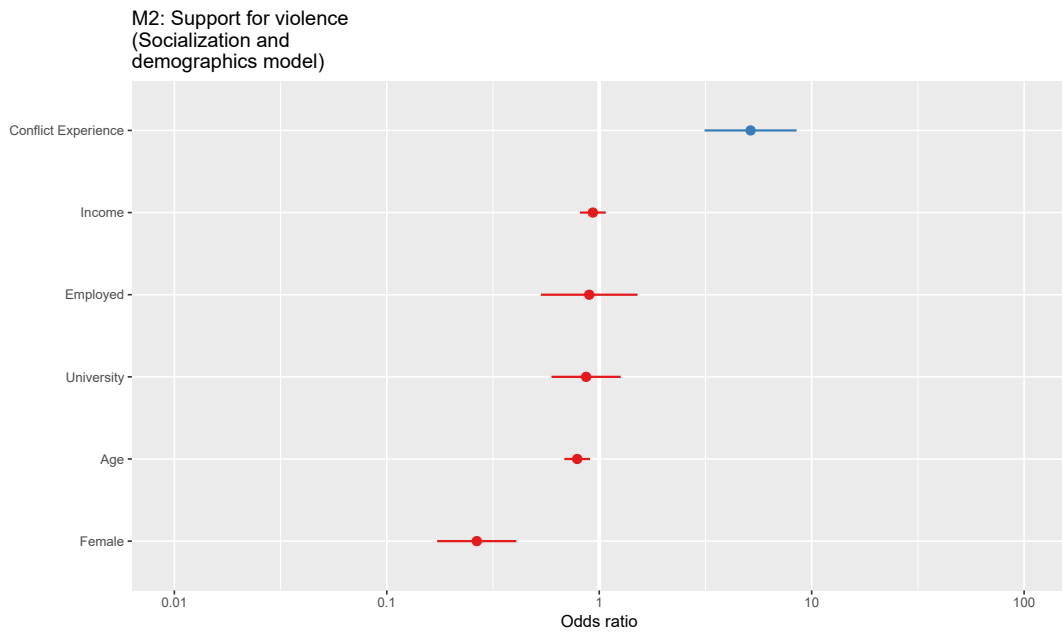


Figure 2.4: This graph displays the effect of conflict exposure and key demographic characteristics on support for violence. 95% confidence intervals displayed. Blue indicates positive effect, red negative.

Focusing first on likelihood of voting, a behavioural measure of political efficacy, we can see that there is a negative correlation between likelihood of voting and support for violence. Therefore, this provides support for H3 that as people become disillusioned with the political system and less likely to vote, they become increasingly supportive of political violence. However, it is not that people are disengaged in politics altogether. Rather, the analysis shows a strong positive correlation between interest in politics and support for violence,

supporting H4. This indicates that those who are willing support violence to achieve political aims have an intense interest in politics, rather than being simply mindlessly violent.

In terms of other variables, we can see that voting to leave the EU is the strongest predictor of support for political violence in this model. To some extent this is unsurprising as there is a strand of research which shows those who support Brexit are more authoritarian, a personality trait which has been linked to higher support for political violence (Zmigrod, Rentfrow, and Robbins 2018; Costello et al. 2022). However, it is notable that a referendum which has ostensibly nothing to do with political violence is so strongly correlated with these extremist attitudes. Surprisingly political and economic grievances have a limited impact, with those who believe that people like them have gained political power in the past five years having slightly less support for political violence. One potential explanation for this is that political and economic grievances are captured by those who voted for Brexit (Carreras, Carreras, and Bowler 2019).

The theoretical framework also proposed there might be an interaction between likelihood of voting and interest in politics on support for violence. This is analysed in an additional model presented in the appendix in Figure A. The results show that the interaction term is in the expected direction, as likelihood of voting declines the effect of interest in politics on support for political violence increases. However, the interaction term just fails to reach statistical significance.

The final model outlined is a combined model which includes all the variables in each of the three individual models in Figure 2.6. This model ensures that all variables of interest are controlled for and shows whether the results from previous models still hold. The first thing to note here is that most of the

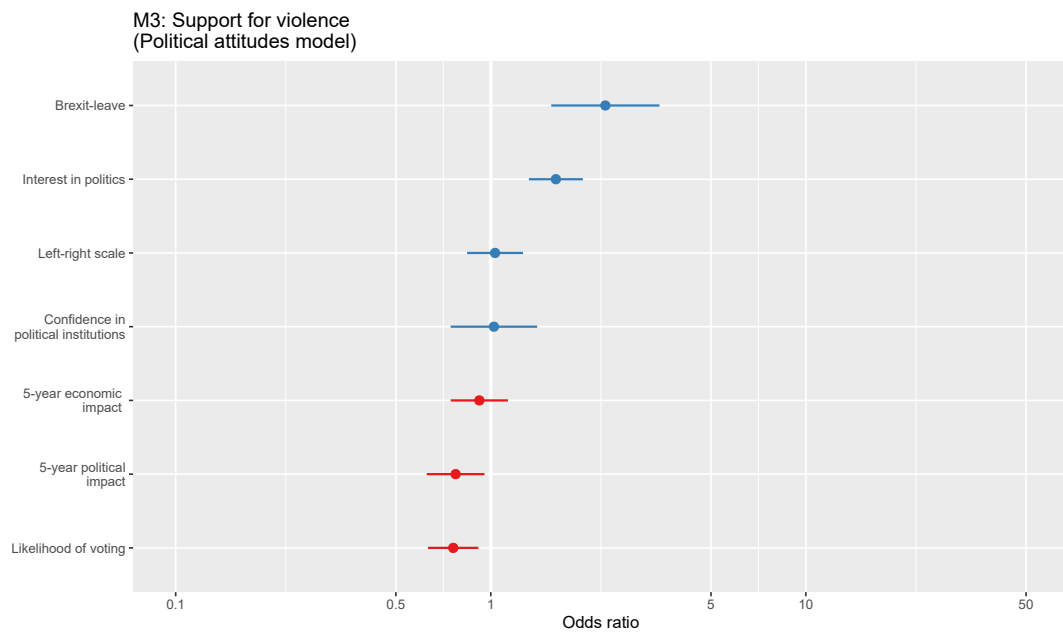


Figure 2.5: This graph displays the relationship between political attitudes and support for violence. 95% confidence intervals displayed. Blue indicates positive effect, red negative.

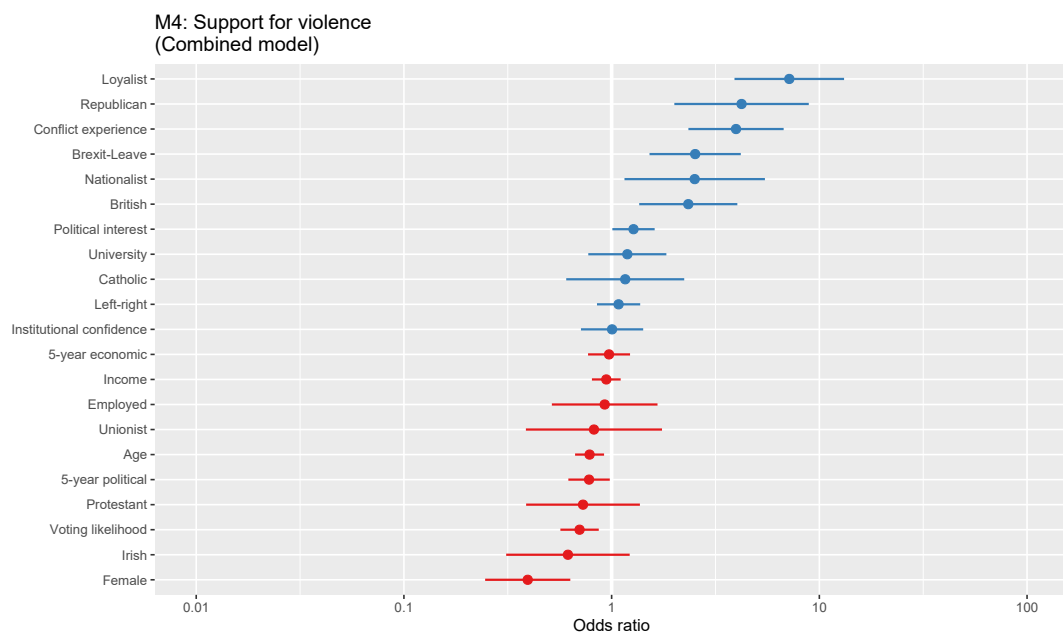


Figure 2.6: This graph displays the combined model with all relevant variables. 95% confidence intervals displayed. Blue indicates positive effect, red negative.

results from the individual models still hold, providing further support for the proposed theoretical framework. Secondly, it is clear that the smaller radical

identity groups are still the strongest predictors of support for political violence, with loyalist and republican identities associated with 8x and 6x higher levels of support for violence. Exposure to conflict violence remains a strong predictor of support for violence also, just below republican identity. Regarding political variables, interest in politics is also still positively correlated with support for violence and voting likelihood continues to have a negative effect on support for violence. Lastly, Brexit continues to exert a very strong effect here, potentially further emphasising how important it is as a proxy for a range of other attitudes.

2.7.3 Robustness

The models above present results for the full sample of respondents. However, given the importance of community identity in the politics of Northern Ireland, it is also important to understand if the predictors of political violence vary across communities. For the purposes of this analysis I simplify the basic structure to those who identify as Protestant (who generally also identify as British and unionist), those who identify as Catholic (who generally also identify as Irish and nationalist), and those who do not identify with either of these identities (primarily no religion). This pattern of overlapping opposing group identities is deeply embedded and can be found in survey evidence going back to the classic work of Rose (1971) and Moxon-Browne (1983), and has persisted to post-Good Friday Northern Ireland (Muldoon et al. 2007). However, despite this pattern, there is a significant minority who do not fall into this simplistic framework, and others who have more fluid identities which incorporate many aspects of both groups of identities (Todd et al. 2006).¹⁹ These factors mean that classifying people straightforwardly as Protestant or Catholic might over-

¹⁹The situation is further complicated by patterns of secularization (albeit slower than in many other societies) and the multiplicity of church affiliations and political authority, particularly within the Protestant community (Todd et al. 2006).

look important nuances within these groups which may affect how they respond to significant political events. Furthermore, it also has normative consequences for political discourse and progress, limiting the possibility of moving beyond the simplistic binary, and propagating an essentialist understanding of politics and community (Conrad 2006; Bryan 2006).

Despite this important atypical minority who do not identify with either community and the additional complex dynamics within each group, there are a number of reasons why religion continues to be an important and useful way to structure analysis, particularly for research such as this. Many aspects of Northern Irish society continue to be structured around religious identity. Although there are attempts to increase educational integration, over 90% of school children still attend primary or post-primary schools which are denominated as either Catholic or Protestant and only 5% attend formally integrated schools (Hewstone et al. 2004; Borooah and Knox 2015). Similarly, there are generally high levels of residential segregation with less than 1% of housing shared between faiths and even social housing is 93% segregated (McClements 2018; McKittrick 2004). Crucially, unlike political or national identity, religious identity is not significantly correlated with political violence in any models for either community presented previously. Therefore, in addition to being an important social cleavage in the real world, it is also the most empirically neutral way to analyse the communities independently.²⁰

The first model presented is the combined Catholic model in Figure 2.7. Again republican identity is the strongest predictor of support for violence. However, in this model no other identity group, including nationalist, is significant, further emphasising that the smaller, more radical identities are critical

²⁰In addition to excluding religious identity from the regression models, these models also only include the remaining identities associated with that community (e.g. nationalist identity is not included in the Protestant model, or unionist identity in the Catholic model).

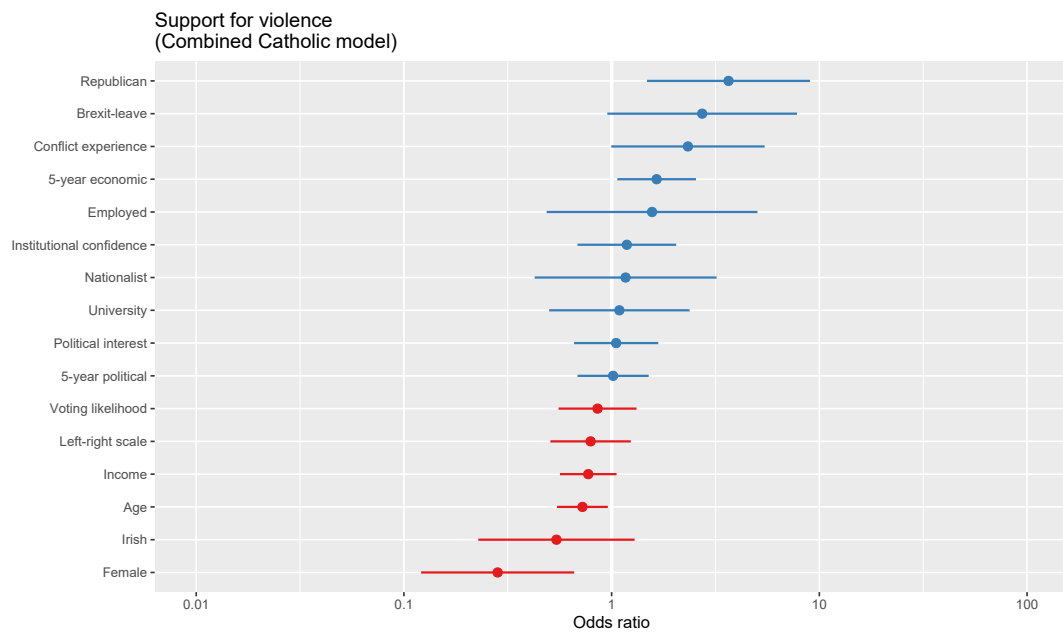


Figure 2.7: This graph displays the combined model for Catholic respondents only. 95% confidence intervals displayed. Blue indicates positive effect, red negative.

for understanding support for political violence and also highlighting that excluding them would bias the analysis for the effect of other identities. Conflict experience is significant but slightly weaker, and only significant at <0.1 level. Gender and age aside, the only other variable which reaches statistical significance in the Catholic model are economic grievances. Respondents who believe that their economic fortunes have declined over the previous 5-years have higher levels of support for political violence. This suggests that economic issues are a significant driver of support for violence amongst the Catholic community, a finding which does not emerge from the full sample.

In terms of the Protestant model presented in Figure 2.8, we can see here that again loyalist identity is the strongest predictor of support for political violence. Unlike the Catholic model, conflict experience remains significant, suggesting that direct exposure to the Troubles is more important for determining support for political violence amongst the Protestant community. Here the two political

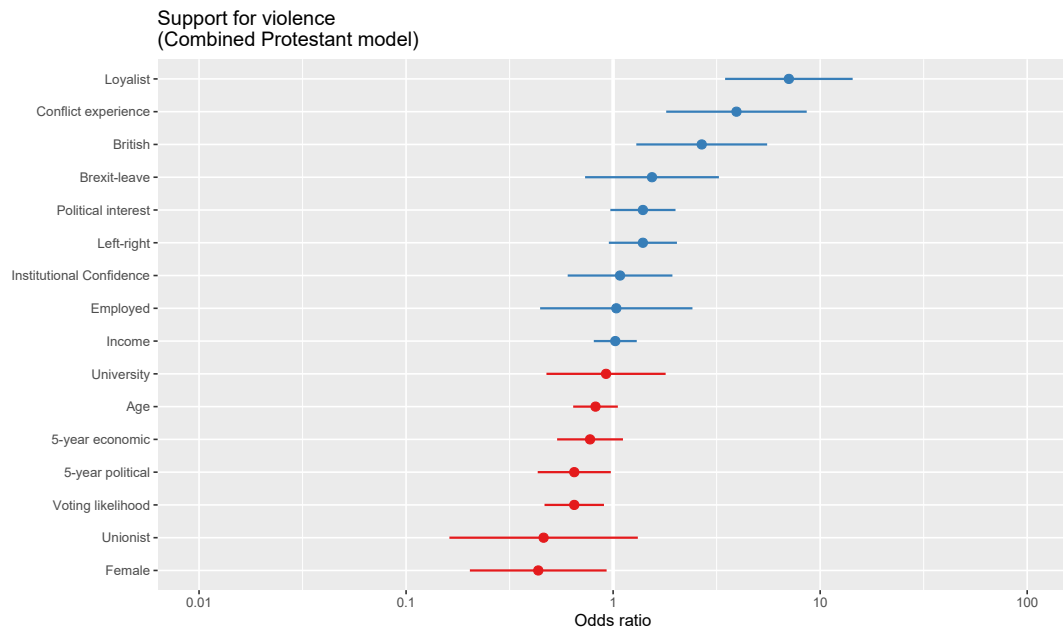


Figure 2.8: This graph displays the combined model for Protestant respondents only. 95% confidence intervals displayed. Blue indicates positive effect, red negative.

(dis)engagement variables also continue to be significant, with voting likelihood negatively correlated with support for political violence and interest in politics positively correlated with support for political violence. These community-specific models highlight that there are important group related experiences and norms which appear to be shaping support for political violence. These are explored more in chapter 2.

Given the dependent variable is binary, the above analysis uses binomial logistic regression. However, there is some research which suggests that using a linear model to analyse binary outcomes can lead to less biased estimates and results which are easier to interpret. In order to ensure the results were not due to model choice, the main analysis including the three independent and one combined model are rerun using linear regression. The plots can be found in the Appendix in Figure 6.1 - 6.4. The main results still hold.

Lastly, as will be discussed in significant detail Chapter 4, during the survey

violent riots broke out in Northern Ireland. The differences in responses before and after the riots will be analysed in detail in Chapter 4, however, it is also important to understand whether any of the findings here are an artefact of the riots. In order to do this, the data was split into before and after the riots, and the analysis was rerun only for those who responded before the onset of the riots. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, there are important differences before and after, particularly in the scale of the effects across the two main communities. However, here we are only focused on attitudes before the riots and particularly interested in the differences between identities *within* different communities, exposure to conflict violence and political attitudes. For this, we rerun all models using logit and linear. The eight additional models are presented in Table 6.2.

For the socialization model the results are identical, with conflict exposure having a large positive effect, whilst age and female still exerting significant negative effects. The results for the political attitudes model are similar also, however, although voting likelihood remains significant, interest in politics is no longer significant (although the direction of the effect remains positive). This lack of significance may be due to the reduced sample size as we see a similar outcome for Brexit. For the intergroup effects, we are interested in comparing the relative effect of different identity groups within communities. Again the results are similar to those with loyalist identity continuing to exert the strongest effect even before the onset of the riots. However, although the effect of republican identity remains stronger in the linear model, nationalist identity exerts a larger effect in the logit model. This holds in the intergroup and combined model.

2.8 Discussion and conclusion

Understanding sources of support for political violence in otherwise established peaceful democracies is increasingly important, and group identities have been highlighted as an important determinant of radical attitudes. In particular, classic literature on conflict and quantitative studies of political violence have generally noted the integral role of large group identities, such as partisanship or ethnicity. These identities are often assumed to play such a central role that questions on support for violence often include reference to them (e.g. ‘do you think it is justified for X-group to use violence in advancing their political goals’) or surveys only collect information on these identities from respondents. Although there are important reasons for this analytical approach, there is a mismatch between the group size and underlying causal mechanisms. In particular, most micro-level qualitative studies indicate that radicalization into extreme views is much more likely in smaller groups due to the feasibility of cultivating and enforcing radical attitudes towards violence, or for redistributing private gains from political violence (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008; Hoeffler 2011). This chapter argues that smaller radical identity groups which are often subsets or splinters of these larger group identities are key to understanding political violence. When these identities are captured and analysed alongside groups which have previously been identified as sources of support for political violence, they will significantly diminish the apparent levels of support in the larger identity group.

The chapter tests this explanation for political violence through a survey conducted in Northern Ireland. In order to analyse the effect of different identities, the survey allows individuals to choose group identities from a long list which includes a broader range of identities many of which are often not cap-

tured in surveys. The chapter proposes that the smaller subset identities in Northern Ireland, republican and loyalist, are likely to be much more strongly correlated with support for violence than all other community identities which have previously been identified. The results support this, with loyalist and republican identities making individuals many times more likely to support political violence than people who do not identify with these groups, and those who identify only with other larger political, national or religious identities. The main results hold in the intergroup attitudes model, combined model, and community specific models.

Whilst the empirical evidence alone is important, the normative and policy implications are clearer. For those focusing on countering radicalization and political violence, it is an inefficient allocation of resources and likely counter-productive to focus on the large religious, political or national identities. As noted emphatically by Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran (2016), there is little value in units such as the now defunct NYPD ‘demographic unit’ which target these large religious or ethnic groups. Rather interventions should be more focused on those who identify with smaller more radical groups and organisations, and specifically ‘networks of mobilization, particularly those that are involved in radical activities which are illegal but which nonetheless fall short of violence’ (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). This more effectively targets resources and also ensures that people are not unfairly targeted or discriminated against.

Lastly, the theoretical framework and analysis helps provide a clearer direction for future research which seeks to understand political violence and emphasises the necessity of collecting information on these smaller groups. A potential challenge for future research is to differentiate between, and understand, the relative importance of group identities and associated mobilization

networks. There is now consistent evidence that identification with large group identities such as religion is insufficient for radicalization into violence (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016), but understanding the relationship between these multiple overlapping identities and how they each contribute to violent extremism is nascent. Further research could focus on qualitatively exploring the way in which people understand the differences between the larger group identities and the smaller subsets, the networks and resources associated with each, and way in which these groups influence their attitudes and behaviour, particularly support for political violence.

The chapter also seeks to identify a micro-level causal mechanism for the macro-level finding that prior conflict is a robust predictor of future conflict. Drawing on political psychology research on conflict socialization, it argue that those who are exposed to higher levels of conflict violence are likely to be socialized into more extreme and permissive attitudes regarding the use of violence to achieve political aims. As a result, higher levels of direct exposure to conflict violence should result in higher levels of support for political violence. The results provide clear support for this and the effect holds across all models, emphasising the importance of direct exposure to conflict violence.

Lastly, I extend arguments regarding the importance of individual political (dis)engagement in shaping attitudes towards political violence. Whilst existing research on civil conflict onset has highlighted the importance of political institutions (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Regan and Bell 2010), bridging the gap to individual attitudes and support for political violence has been limited and existing studies primarily focus on political efficacy (Dyrstad and Hillesund 2020). I develop a political engagement - disengagement dichotomy, which proposes that micro-level disillusionment with political institutions is likely to push people away in formal political processes such as elections, and push them towards

other avenues for political change, particularly political violence. However, these individuals are not disengaged from politics entirely; rather, individuals who turn towards political violence are likely to have atypically high interest in politics rather than being disengaged and apolitical. This provides further support to those who challenge the conclusion that those who become involved in violence are motivated primarily by greed (Collier and Hoeffler 2014). The results support this, suggesting that individuals who support political violence may be disillusioned with formal political processes but are intensely interested in politics.²¹

The results have a number of important implications for scholars and policy makers. Firstly, although the results emphasise the importance of group identity in shaping attitudes towards violence, they also clearly show that researchers should be cautious about attributing these effects to large group identities, such as ethnicity, religion or nationality. Not only is there a possible mismatch between the theoretical causal mechanisms identified and the empirical operationalization, but in some contexts focusing on these can generate prejudice against large populations of innocent people and misdirect important resources for tackling extremism and radicalization, a pattern which has been most apparent with western countries and Islam in recent years (Qurashi 2018). Researchers should be more cautious about attributing radical attitudes to these large groups. Instead we should more carefully identify and analyse smaller group identities which are often subsets or splinters of larger groups. These need to be understood with greater rigor and detail because they are more likely to be sources of support for political violence.

Secondly, the results raise a significant normative paradox regarding political

²¹Evidence for a potential interaction between likelihood of voting and political interest points in the correct direction but falls just short of statistical significance, which may be due to the sample size.

engagement. Most political analysis and discussion bemoans a lack of political understanding and engagement amongst the electorate. These critiques range from criticism of the public's limited understanding of policy through to general apathy and disinterest. However, the results here indicate that an increased interest in politics leads to significantly higher levels of support for political violence. The trend is clear and consistent with support for political violence and interest in politics strongly positively correlated, and this effect remains even when controlling for a range of demographic, political and identity characteristics. However, an important corollary to this is the potential pacifying effects of political and electoral institutions which are perceived as functional and responsive to citizens.

Crucially, the mere presence of peaceful democratic institutions is not enough, particularly for individuals who are intensely interested in political outcomes, as the results also show that there is a significant negative correlation between voting likelihood and support for political violence. It appears that where institutions are not perceived as effective in channeling and responding to political demands, individuals may opt out of peaceful political processes (e.g. voting and elections) and instead turn to political violence. Given the clear evidence that they are intensely interested in political outcomes, those who turn towards political violence potentially could have been assuaged by effective political institutions which respond to their demands. The evidence for this is also clear in qualitative research on the formation and growth of armed groups in Northern Ireland in the 1960-70s, when many who ultimately joined the IRA did so because they saw the peaceful civil rights movement met with violence and political change stymied at Stormont (Porta 2014). This research provides further empirical evidence for this and should serve as a caution for politicians.

2.8.1 Are these results generalizable?

An important question when interpreting these results is whether they are generalizable to other contexts, particularly to other established democracies where there is growing concern regarding support for political violence. On the one hand, Northern Ireland is part of the UK, one of the oldest democracies in the world and therefore it is ostensibly a critical case for understanding support for political violence in established democracies. However, as noted above, Northern Ireland has a somewhat distinct political history as a region separated from the rest of the UK. From the early 1970s to the early 1990s it suffered from a low-level civil conflict which resulted in over 3000 deaths. Although a peace agreement was reached over 25 years ago, remnants of paramilitary groups still exist and the threat of political violence may be higher than in other parts of the UK.

Despite this, and somewhat surprisingly, the levels of support for political violence this research finds in Northern Ireland are on par with, or lower than, levels of support for political violence found in similar surveys conducted in the USA (Kalmoe and Mason 2019; Kornfield and Alfaro 2022; PRRI 2021).²² This indicates that the underlying trends in support for violence in Northern Ireland may be similar to those in other countries which would make the results more generalizable. In addition, many current democracies have experienced significant variation in their levels of political violence over time, including similar low-level conflicts with separatist movements or oppressed minorities. Furthermore, many of these conflicts involved conflicting ethnic groups, similar to the patterns we see in Northern Ireland. Although these conflicts did not

²²Although there has been some research which questions whether this reflects true intent to carry out political violence (Westwood et al. 2022), the original survey questions and formats closely match ours so potential issues with overestimation may be similar

reach the level of severity experienced in Northern Ireland, many have similar identity structures of large ethnic or national groups, with smaller subsets or splinters which are likely to be the primary sources of political violence (Spencer and Croucher. 2008; Canavan and Turkoglu. 2022b).

One might further argue that the overlapping and interacting identity structure found in Northern Ireland is reflected in the political landscape in the USA and other countries, where we see social sorting resulting in multiple overlapping identities (Levendusky 2009; Mason 2018). Although the electoral system forces a simplistic two party system, the underlying coalitions within this are more complex, with research showing that Trump supporters have higher levels of support for political violence than others who only identify as republican (Balz, Clement, and Guskin 2022). Additional radical groups have also emerged, particularly on the right, who are associated with white supremacy (the Proudboys, Oath Keepers etc) but also to a lesser extent on the left (Antifa) (Beauchamp 2021). Without equating these groups or passing judgment, it seems clear that these smaller subsets pose a higher risk of radicalization and political violence. Furthermore, research focused on Israel-Palestine highlights how disentangling multiple layers of identity and group membership is important for understanding radical attitudes and action in this context also (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). In short, this complex structure of political and group identities in Northern Ireland is reflected in many other countries, including established democracies, and therefore the theoretical framework is potentially generalizable beyond the case presented here.

Notwithstanding the discussion above, these results should be interpreted with a note of caution with respect to causality. It is unclear whether individuals turn first towards political violence and then choose to identify with these groups, or whether they identify with the group first and are then radi-

calized into political violence through ongoing interaction with members of the group. It is also plausible (arguably likely) that the process is more messy and dynamic - a complex and interactive process which does not happen overnight or consciously with individuals radicalized into extremist attitudes and groups concurrently (Porta 2014). Causality is also potentially a challenge for exposure to conflict violence as those with higher levels of exposure to violence may be those who are participating in the conflict, and therefore have higher levels of support for violence before their exposure. This is explored further through a quasi-natural experiment in chapter 3.

Lastly, these results rely on the willingness of respondents to openly admit their support for political violence. However, political violence is a sensitive topic, which may result in individuals concealing their true attitudes. Revealing these concealed preferences and estimating more accurate levels of support for violence is the focus of chapter 3.

3 Chapter 3: Who *Actually* Supports Political Violence?

Abstract

A recent critical strand of research argues that support for political violence amongst ordinary civilians is overestimated. This chapter proposes that political violence is a stigmatized preference which causes individuals to conceal their true attitudes. This phenomenon is known as social desirability bias and would lead to an underestimation of support for violence. Critically, this effect is likely to vary significantly across groups depending on their historical experience of oppression, reliance on violence, and the cues of political elites which create distinct group norms. The results show that support for violence in Northern Ireland is one third higher when measured by a list experiment designed to elicit more truthful answers. Furthermore, this effect stems entirely from those who identify with historically dominant groups whose political elites have publicly rejected political violence, whilst supporting it in private. Conversely, there is no difference among people who identify with groups linked to the historically oppressed groups who have relied on political violence. An additional provocative finding is that gender and age differences in support for violence disappear entirely when measured through the list experiment.

3.1 Introduction

Are people willing to admit they support political violence? Do people exaggerate their radicalism? In response to findings that there is a significant minority of the US population that support political violence, some researchers have proposed that these results overestimate actual support for violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2022b; Westwood et al. 2022). These claims have been robustly challenged elsewhere (Kalmoe and Mason 2022a), but this chapter explores an alternative perspective - that support for political violence may in fact be underestimated. Political violence is a sensitive topic and potentially stigmatized preference, which may cause individuals to conceal their true attitudes, a phenomenon known as social desirability bias. This effect is likely due in part to political violence being a criminal offence, but also due to social and specific group norms regarding peaceful political contestation. As a result, there are potentially norms against openly supporting political violence, which may make respondents unwilling to openly admit that they support political violence¹.

The tendency of respondents to conceal their views on sensitive topics has been termed social desirability bias (Krumpal 2013). Social desirability bias refers to the propensity of people to answer questions in a way which they think will make others view them more favourably or to avoid violating social norms (Krumpal 2013). This chapter argues that group norms impact the acceptability of openly supporting political violence which causes individuals who identify with certain groups to conceal their true attitudes. Whilst some groups may openly endorse political violence due to their history or social context, other groups may reject political violence, or do not want to openly admit supporting political violence.² Therefore, although recent research has argued that the

¹Even when the survey is online and anonymous as shown by (Dodou and Winter 2014)

²There are also additional reasons which may be relevant for understanding why people

levels of the support for political violence may be overestimated (Mernyk et al. 2022; Westwood et al. 2022), this chapter argues the opposite - that individuals from certain groups may *conceal* their support political violence, resulting in research which underestimates support for political violence in the population.³

Understanding the true proportion of the population who support political violence is critical for academic and normative reasons. If policymakers and scholars believe that levels of support for political violence are lower than they actually are, the issue may receive less attention and resources, so the threat may grow without any action taken to address the problem with the potential for significant consequences. An additional and potentially more corrosive problem could arise if there are certain groups who systematically report lower levels of support for political violence than their actual opinions due to perceived group norms. In this situation, interventions to combat radicalization may be targeted at the wrong groups, allowing discontent to fester and the threat of violence to increase among those who conceal their radicalism, whilst also increasing discontent amongst those who are unfairly targeted.

In order to overcome concealment of true attitudes towards political violence this chapter uses a list experiment, which is a survey technique designed to draw out more truthful answers from respondents (Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997; Blair and Imai 2012). The mechanics of list experiments are explained in detail later but they have been used to improve the accuracy of research on public attitudes towards racism (Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997), sexism (Burden, Ono, and Yamada 2017), intimate partner violence (Asadullah et al. 2021),

conceal their views on political violence. Specifically, people may be concerned about the risk of legal consequences or other forms of sanction if they openly support political violence. These fears can exist irrespective of whether it is at all plausible for someone to face legal consequences.

³It is also possible that both are occurring, with people interpreting the question in different ways and also concealing their true attitudes. However, this chapter is focused on concealment of attitudes

conflict-related sexual violence (Traunmüller, Kijewski, and Freitag. 2019) and chemical weapons use (Blair, Chu, and Schwartz 2021). They allow respondents to articulate support for a sensitive issue without explicitly revealing it to the researcher, and in this research they are used to more accurately estimate actual levels of support for political violence. Furthermore, when compared to results from a traditional direct survey question they can highlight the extent of concealment and which groups are more predisposed to dishonest responding. This latter comparison is possible through recent advances in analytical techniques which allow researchers to identify if particular demographics or groups have a higher proportion who are unwilling to express support for political violence openly, but reveal their support only through the list experiment (Traunmüller, Kijewski, and Freitag. 2019).

This chapter argues that groups which have been historically oppressed and relied on political violence will be more willing to express support for political violence openly because they have often developed norms which see political violence as necessary or even laudable. This is especially true where in-group elites were involved in such violence. For these groups, there will be limited difference between levels of support as expressed through the list experiment versus the direct question. Conversely, dominant groups who had a monopoly on state violence through their access to state power, and who have a more limited direct connection to political violence, will develop norms against openly supporting political violence, even if some endorse it privately. This effect is likely to be particularly strong where political violence was publicly disavowed by political elites whilst they were providing support to paramilitary groups covertly. For these groups, we would expect to see significantly higher levels of support for political violence in the list experiment relative to the direct question.

Applying this theoretical framework to Northern Ireland, we would expect that those who identify with groups from the Catholic community (i.e. they identify as nationalist, republican, Catholic or Irish), a historically oppressed minority which has at times seen political violence as necessary to defend their community and even laudable, and has political leaders who were involved in paramilitarism, will be more willing to openly express support for political violence in the direct question. The role of political leaders in shaping norms towards political violence continues to this day with the leader of Sinn Féin - a republican party who are currently the largest party in Northern Ireland - stating recently that 'there was no alternative' to IRA violence (Meredith 2022). As a result of these group norms towards political violence, those who support political violence will be willing to admit it openly, and there will be no difference between the results from a direct question versus the list experiment.

Conversely, we would expect that those aligned with the Protestant unionist community (i.e. they identify as unionist, loyalist, Protestant or British), a historically dominant majority group who had almost total control of state power, with political elites who publicly criticised paramilitary violence but have supported it covertly, will be less willing to express support for political violence openly in the direct question. As a result, people who identify with the Protestant unionist community should have significantly higher levels of support for political violence when analysed through responses to the list experiment versus direct question, indicating social norms against openly expressing support for political violence.

This theoretical framework is tested using a survey which included direct questions asking respondents whether they support political violence and list experiments (item count technique) which allow respondents to indirectly indicate support for political violence. A number of important trends emerge

from the analysis. First, in the general population support for political violence increases by a third, from 9% to 12%, when measured through a list experiment compared to a direct question, indicating that there is social desirability bias against openly supporting political violence. This is equivalent to an extra 60,000 people supporting political violence in Northern Ireland than was indicated by the direct question.

Second, these trends are not uniform across the population. Historically oppressed groups with a history of using political violence, and particularly those groups which are led by political elites who were involved in campaigns of political violence (i.e. the nationalist-republican community) are more willing to openly express support for political violence, and therefore there is no difference between levels of support in the list experiment versus the direct question. Conversely, historically dominant groups who have a weaker and more clandestine link to political violence, and whose political leadership publicly condemned political violence whilst supporting it covertly (i.e. the unionist-loyalist community), express much higher support for political violence in the list experiment than in the direct question. These effects are substantial with the level of support almost doubling in some cases, and are consistent across the various identities linked with each of these communities.

A number of other additional trends emerge in the data. Firstly, although chapter 2 indicated that women have lower levels of support for political violence as measured by the direct question, this effect vanishes when support is measured through the list experiment. Somewhat surprisingly, the results from the list experiment indicate that women have approximately the same levels of support for political violence as men, when the effect of social desirability bias is removed. This provocative outcome echoes findings from work by Kalmoe (2013) that despite apparent gender differences in attitudes towards state vio-

lence, these are not driven by differences in underlying aggressive personality traits between men and women. The analysis presented here suggests that there may be perceived norms around masculinity, femininity and violence which result in a lower willingness to express open support for violence among women (Moradi and Parent 2013).

This chapter makes a number of theoretical and methodological contributions. Firstly, from a theoretical perspective it highlights the influence of group norms on social desirability bias, specifically it shows how the historical experience of groups shapes not only their support for political violence but also their willingness to admit this openly. This concealment provides a significant challenge for researchers and emphasises the challenge of researching sensitive topics such as support for political violence, where individuals are likely to conceal their true attitudes. It challenges some recent articles which claim that estimates of support for political violence are overstated and shows that support for violence in Northern Ireland as measured by a direct question is a third lower than true levels of support for political violence.

Lastly, the results from this chapter do not seek to invalidate the utility of the analysis presented in chapter 2. Although it is important to understand concealed support for political violence, there are important differences between the effect of open versus concealed support for violence. The most important difference are the social implications. Where political violence is openly supported, this creates a social context in which individuals are more likely to participate in political violence. Conversely, where political violence is rejected publicly, even where it is supported privately, then actual political violence is less likely. The logic of this draws on the classic work on preference falsification developed by Kuran (1997), who argued that where individuals conceal their opposition to an incumbent regime, political change is less likely.

In the following section I explore the potential effect social desirability bias has on willingness to express open support for political violence, and specifically how this might be more intense for certain demographic and social groups due to the influence of socialization and group norms.

3.2 Political violence as a sensitive research topic

Research on social attitudes often focus on sensitive topics which are social taboos, criminal or illegal behaviour, extreme opinions, or a combination of these (Krumpal 2013). Sensitive topics can be complex to study as they potentially pose ‘a substantial threat’ for those responding, where the collection or revelation of this data would be ‘problematic for the researcher and/or the researched’ (Lee and Renzetti 1993). These sensitive topics often entail risks and costs for respondents, ‘such as negative feelings of shame and embarrassment or negative consequences, such as the possibility of sanctions’ (Krumpal 2013). Although the fear of sanction is often related to criminal or illegal behaviour, much of the concern for respondents in social science research is focused on social implications and sanctions. As a result, whether a topic is sensitive often ‘inheres less in the topic itself and more in the relationship between that topic and the social context within which the research is conducted’ (Lee and Renzetti 1993).

Prior research has identified three aspects which contribute to the sensitive nature of a topic (Tourangeau and Yan. 2007). For the purposes of this research, I will label these as: 1. Intrinsic sensitivity; 2. Sanction sensitivity, and; 3. Social sensitivity. Intrinsic sensitivity is where the topic itself is sensitive irrespective of the respondents answer (e.g. sexual history or preferences). Sanction sensitivity is where disclosure of the information may result in specific

consequences for the respondent (e.g. prosecution). Social sensitivity is where the attitudes violates social or group norms. Whilst all three of these aspects of sensitivity may be interrelated, each contributes in a different way to the potential sensitivity of a topic and therefore a respondents willingness to answer a question on this topic, or answer it truthfully.⁴ It is the latter two, sanction and social sensitivity, which are most likely to lead to misrepresentation in direct questioning, with intrinsic sensitivity more likely to affect willingness to answer the question at all (irrespective of the respondents' answer). In the case of political violence, potentially all three aspects of sensitivity may affect how individuals respond to questions on this topic.

Firstly, violence is generally seen as taboo, and therefore questions which focus on open support for injuring or killing other people may be intrinsically sensitive. In fact, some researchers have argued that there are taboos around speaking at all to those directly involved in political violence, which makes gaining an accurate understanding of the subject challenging (Sluka 2008). Secondly, political violence is criminal in almost all countries and although admitting to support for political violence is unlikely to be sufficient for prosecution, respondents may be unwilling to risk the potential consequences. Lastly, there are likely to be societal and group norms against supporting political violence given the traumatic and damaging impact it can have on peaceful society and communities. As noted by Gøtzsche-Astrup, Van den Bos, and Hogg (2020), 'while proviolent attitudes are not illegal, they tend to violate societal or wider human norms— at least in most democratic countries'. Although political violence is potentially sensitive across the three sources of sensitivity, it is social sensitivity which may be most relevant for understanding the impact of groups

⁴Social desirability bias in responding to survey questions is most clearly to social sensitivity, but unwillingness of respondents to answer questions honestly may be influenced by each of these types of sensitivity, and the presence of all three may have a compounding effect.

norms, as this may lead individuals to ‘distort their answers towards the social norm in order to maintain a socially favorable self-presentation’, a phenomenon often referred to as ‘social desirability bias’ (Krumpal 2013).

In summary, political violence is a sensitive research topic which may lead individuals to conceal their views on political violence when asked directly. The next section explores how the potentially socially sensitive nature of political violence may not be uniform across the population but is likely to vary according to group and societal norms.

3.2.1 How group norms shape social desirability

Existing work on social desirability bias argues that it can operate at an individual and topic level (Randall and Fernandes 1991). At the first level, it acts like a personality trait with different people more or less susceptible to conforming in ways which they deem as socially desirable, whilst at the second level, certain activities are generally understood as more or less socially desirable (Randall and Fernandes 1991). Whilst this is a useful starting point, it overlooks the possibility that social desirability may operate at other levels of analysis. Specifically, social desirability may be affected by group level factors, and these may be even be more important when trying to understand who is likely to misrepresent their true attitudes in surveys due to their social implication (Sjöström and Holst. 2002).

According to social desirability bias, when individuals respond to questions which are sensitive, and particularly questions which are socially sensitive, their concern is for how they will be perceived by others. This concern is likely to be driven in part by perceptions of society at large; however, the effect may be stronger for how they will be perceived by people they know and particu-

larly those who are considered as part of their in-group (He et al. 2015; Lee and Renzetti 1993). As outlined by Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim (2022), an individuals ‘reference network’ is likely to be particularly influential in an individuals perception of the social norms that they should adhere to.

Social identity theory is a central framework for understanding the impact of group identities on political behaviour and attitudes (Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015). At a basic level social identity entails attachment to a group and a set of preferences linked to this identity (Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015; Shayo 2009). Whilst social identity has been widely used as an explanatory variable, the actual content of identities has received less attention (Martherus 2020). Group norms are key to understanding social identities. A norm can be defined as ‘a socially acceptable group prototype’ which describes or proscribes attitudes, traits, or behaviors of the group (Martherus 2020; Cialdini and Trost 1998). They shape the attitudes in-group members are expected to hold, and the behaviour which is deemed acceptable or admirable (Huddy 2013). These include personal characteristics but also political beliefs such as the policies individuals should support, candidates they should vote for, and the legitimacy of different forms of political behaviour and action (Martherus 2020). Individuals who break or challenge group norms can suffer sanction, censure and ostracization by the group. Group norms are so important to group identity that they have been described by Huddy (2013) as ‘the content of identities’, and are potentially important for understanding variation in attitudes towards political violence across groups.

Group norms serve different purposes and are developed through a variety of processes. The prevailing literature on the development of norms has focused on a number of explanations for why groups cultivate certain norms: potential benefits; contribution to survival; positive differentiation; group predictability;

and elite behaviour.⁵ As a result of significant variation between groups in their size, wealth, social status, and culture (amongst other factors), groups are likely to generate different norms. Furthermore, norms bestow different benefits depending on the context and group characteristics. However, not only do norms shape different attitudes but they are also likely to exert a different effect on the social desirability of expressing particular attitudes. Existing research on social desirability bias suggests that it varies significantly across cultures and groups (Bernardi 2006). For example, there are significant differences between national and ethnic groups in how social desirability affects responses on topics such as job satisfaction and public service motivation (Kim and Kim 2016; Kim and Kim 2017). Extending this further, certain groups are more likely to misrepresent their skills and abilities in survey responses, whilst others are more likely to misrepresent their actions (Lalwani, Shrum, and Chiu 2009). If socially desirable responding varies between groups on relatively mundane topics such as job satisfaction and ability, it is likely that it also varies on more socially and politically contentious topics. In the following section I explore how groups norms might affect the acceptability of political violence and also the social desirability of expressing open support for violence.

⁵Taking these in turn, norms may bestow particular benefits to a group, such as buying products or services from other people within the same group, thus increasing wealth within the group (Sumner 1906). In terms of group survival, cultivating norms around the laudability of sacrifice on behalf of the group or defending the group violently may sustain group survival (Feldman 1984). Positive differentiation is core to social identity theory and may cause groups to admire characteristics which are more common among their in-group, and therefore positively distinguish group members from others (Hogg and Reid 2006). Lastly, group elites cultivate the norms either in the interests of the group or because it benefits the elites specifically (Bursztyn, Egorov, and Fiorin 2017). For example, many groups have a system of tithes (e.g. Mormons) requiring regular financial donations which allows the group to build important institutions and organizational capacity but also enriches elites within the church. It is possible that all of these factors may be present, facilitating the cultivation of strong and widely accepted group norms.

3.2.2 Group norms and political violence

As noted above, political violence is likely to be a sensitive topic due to its criminality and the norms against it in most societies. This may lead people to misrepresent their true attitudes towards political violence when responding to survey questions. However, the intensity or acceptance of these norms may be affected by important group level factors. As eloquently explained by Huddy (2013), group membership only ‘gains political content through norms...that connect group membership to specific political attitudes’. Therefore, given the social and political significance of using political violence, it is likely that groups will develop norms around the acceptability of using or supporting political violence, particularly in a context of intergroup conflict. Analysing the variation in these norms across groups requires understanding the ways in which norms develop and applying this to the specific group identities.

This chapter argues that norms around supporting political violence are likely to be shaped, in part, by group status and historical relations between groups. In particular whether a group has been historically dominant or oppressed, and related to this, their reliance on political violence, and the attitudes of group elites towards political violence, are likely to influence norms regarding political violence. This argument draws on a rich body of literature cataloguing ‘psychological asymmetries’ in the attitudes of groups depending on their majority-minority status (Bilali, Çelik, and Ok 2014; Hirsch-Hoefer, Vashdi, et al. 2021). This strand of research highlights that a broad range of attitudes and behaviours are affected by whether a group is a dominant majority or an oppressed minority (Tropp and Pettigrew 2005; Hirsch-Hoefer, Canetti, Rapaport, et al. 2016). For example, minorities are aware of the discrimination, prejudice and ill treatment they face which leads them to develop

‘self-protection’ norms, including minority group parents promoting mistrust, wariness and caution around out-group members for fear of violence or other negative interactions (Crocker and Major 1989; Tropp and Pettigrew 2005; Bilali, Çelik, and Ok 2014). Minority groups also tend towards attitudes and ideologies which allow them to maintain strong ethnic identities, whilst conversely majority groups prefer ‘assimilation ideologies that require sacrificing ethnic identities for a shared national identity’ (Dovidio, Gaertner, and Saguy 2007). Lastly, minority groups also appear to have higher levels of post-traumatic stress irrespective of levels of exposure to political violence (Hirsch-Hoefler, Vashdi, et al. 2021). This chapter proposes that these groups can also develop asymmetric norms around the permissibility of political violence.

3.2.3 Oppression, historical violence and group leaders

For minority groups who face significant levels of political exclusion and oppression, particularly from other ethnic groups which dominate state power, political violence may be seen as contributing important benefits to the group and even necessary for group survival. In fact, we can apply the theoretical explanations for the cultivation of norms above to the norms developed by minority groups towards political violence.

Firstly, in terms of benefits and motivation, political violence may increase the bargaining power of the minority group, coercing an otherwise unwilling state to share power or distribute resources more equally. That minority groups who are excluded from access to political or economic power come to rely on political violence to challenge this exclusion is evident in the literature on conflict onset and particularly ethnic group rebellion - there is now a solid evidence base which documents the role horizontal economic inequality and ethnic group

exclusion from political power plays in conflict onset and ethnic group rebellion (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Østby 2008; Rørbæk and Knudsen 2017). When there are significant inequalities between groups, rebellion is almost always a phenomenon associated with the minority oppressed group (Østby 2008). The explanations for this are based on both group identity and economic rationalism (Østby 2008). Discrimination and grievances strengthen group identity, and also make individuals more willing to support extreme options to alleviate their suffering. Therefore, minority oppressed groups are more likely to turn to political violence in order to address economic and political inequalities.

Furthermore, as the threat of out-group and/or state violence increases, groups may increasingly come to see political violence as necessary for their survival. The perception that political violence is necessary to defend the in-group from out-group violence is the central thesis of literature on ‘security dilemmas’, where groups come to fear annihilation in the context of a collapse of authority and so take up arms to defend themselves (Posen 1993). Although security dilemmas generally occur in a context of state collapse, the belief that groups need to take their security into their own hands can arise when there is a perception that the state is dominated by the opposition ethnic group and fails to protect the oppressed minority. Examples of oppressed minorities turning to militia groups in order to defend themselves are common. In Rwanda, prior to and during the genocide, the RPF expanded and moved into parts of Rwanda in order to defend Tutsis against the Hutu dominated army and paramilitaries (Hintjens 1999). A similar explanation is given for the rapid expansion and return to violence of the republican movement in Northern Ireland during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In this context, peaceful protests for civil rights for Catholics were met with violence by unionist gangs (Maney 2007; Porta 2008). This was further exacerbated by violent repression by police and the army

in Northern Ireland, who were seen as representing the unionist community. This escalated to such an extent that there were areas of Northern Ireland, particularly the Bogside in Derry, where police and the army could not enter, and which were overseen by locally organised republican groups (Byrne 2015).

In contexts such as Northern Ireland or Rwanda, where the minority population feel that they are vulnerable to violent attacks by the out-group, and where state forces such as the police are unlikely to protect them or are actually complicit in the attacks, norms may develop around political violence where it comes to be seen not only as acceptable and necessary, but actually as noble and laudable. Furthermore, if such norms develop, then this also facilitates positive differentiation from other groups, and individuals who participate in political violence within the in-group are viewed more positively. In these situations, in-group rewards and sanctions can often be linked to support for, and participation in, political violence (McCauley and Moskaleiko 2008).

As these norms are inculcated and intensified over time this can lead to the glorification of political violence and those who participate in it. As noted by Cederman, Wimmer, and Min (2010), ‘ethnonationalist activists attempt to glorify their group’s history through one-sided narratives that stress their own victories’, and from a practical perspective the prior participation in political violence ‘means that violence is no longer unthinkable but constitutes part of the accepted repertoire of action’. As a result, ethnic groups can come to view political violence as a core part of their group identity, and cultivate norms to reflect that. This public glorification of political violence is common among many oppressed minority groups. One such example are the Kurds, who are a large oppressed minority in Turkey.⁶ Given their exclusion from political power in Turkey through a variety of different legal, military and social tactics, Kurds

⁶The Kurds also have sizable populations in Iraq and Iran

have sought to gain political independence and defend themselves through political violence. In order to generate support for political violence and encourage willing participants in political violence, Kurds have cultivated norms around admiring those who die in their struggle, who they refer to as ‘martyrs’ (Rudi 2018; Genç 2018). This can be seen mostly clearly in the prominence of ‘the martyrs’ in the Nerwoz celebrations, one of the most important cultural events in the Kurdish calendar (Rudi 2018).

The phenomenon of martyrdom is not unique to Kurds, but is also an integral part of the Irish republican struggle. The concept of a ‘blood sacrifice’ was important to leading participants in the 1916 rebellion, a seminal event in Irish history which entailed violent rebellion against British rule (Dalton 1974). Similarly, the campaign of terrorism and political violence waged by the IRA in Northern Ireland was in the words of Shanahan (2008), ‘embedded in, and drew moral confidence from, an ideology according to which that struggle was absolutely necessary; blood sacrifice and martyrdom were ennobling’ (Shanahan 2008). The impact of these narratives and public glorification of political violence cultivates norms which make political violence *socially desirable*. As a result, group members of oppressed minorities who have historically relied on political violence are likely to openly admit to supporting political violence.

Lastly, in terms of the role of elites, research on political and groups elites show they play a central role in developing group norms through their rhetoric and other cues (McLaughlin et al. 2017; Hogg and Reid 2006; Shin et al. 2022). Specifically, in relation to political violence, elite activation is a common explanation for ethnic conflict (Fearon and Laitin 2000). Similarly, research on political violence in Nigeria, a country afflicted by recurrent political violence, finds that ‘the emergence and sustenance of organized political violence in Nigeria is a direct result of elite political culture in Nigeria’ (Seiyefa 2017). This

process is present in more established democracies also, with research on elite behaviour in the United States which shows that extreme elite rhetoric can undermine democratic norms (Clayton et al. 2021). This research shows the critical role political and group elites play in cultivating support for political violence amongst group members. Given minority elites are often excluded from traditional democratic processes and institutions, they are more likely to turn to political violence to attain power and to tackle the grievances or fears articulated above. Elite cues can come in the form of explicit statements but they can also influence group norms through their behaviour (Westlake 2017). Therefore, the impact of political elites is likely to be even stronger where they have openly supported political violence and actually participated in it.

The importance of elites in shaping attitudes towards political violence can be seen in the contrasting trajectory of political contestation in Northern Ireland and South Africa, which both experienced significant civil rights movements in the 1960s which were met with harsh state violence and repression (alongside vigilante violence from out-groups). In Northern Ireland, this transitioned into a civil conflict which resulted in thousands of deaths over the subsequent 25 – 30 years, whilst in South Africa, the anti-Apartheid movement's violent campaigns only ever targeted public infrastructure. Whilst there are a number of explanations for the differing trajectories,⁷ one important factor was the role of political elites. In South Africa, political elites such as Nelson Mandela generally rejected political violence which targeted humans, whilst in Northern Ireland high profile republican political leaders, such as Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, joined the IRA and pursued political violence against state and civilian targets (Landau 2012; Shanahan 2008). These differing approaches by political elites cultivated different norms around political violence. Crucially, these leaders

⁷South African political leaders may have eschewed political violence due to the threat of extreme retaliation by the Apartheid state and loss of international support

then went on to be significant public political elites after conflict, sustaining their influence on perceptions on the nobility and utility of political violence.⁸

In summary, oppressed minorities who have historically relied on political violence, and also developed cultural norms around celebrating and lauding participation in political violence, are more likely to openly admit supporting political violence. In fact, for these groups, it may even be socially desirable to openly admit supporting political violence. As a result, *there will not be any difference in the level of support for violence when asked openly through a direct question or indirectly through a list question.*

3.2.4 Political dominance and clandestine support for political violence

Conversely, for dominant majority groups, norms relating to political violence may be more complex. Where majority groups control government and therefore have a monopoly on ‘legitimate’ state violence, political violence may be viewed as a direct threat to their power and control over resources. As a result, they may be less willing to openly support using violence to achieve political goals - it is in their direct group interests to disavow and criticise political violence outside state forces such as the police or military. Therefore, they are likely to develop norms around political violence which discourage them from endorsing it, at least in public. To support these norms they are likely to develop sanctions which punish those who support political violence openly. These controls may even extend to other acts which challenge state power such as protest or political organising.

⁸As noted above, there are likely a number of other factors which contributed to the varying approaches taken to political violence in Northern Ireland and South Africa, some of which may have influenced the decision-making of political elites, but ultimately the tactics favoured by political elites were important in the cultivation of group norms.

The attitudes of dominant majority groups towards political violence are somewhat neglected as they are generally not the groups who rebel, and thus have received less attention in the literature. However, there is related research on attitudes towards peace and compromise in intergroup conflict which shows that majority dominant groups have more positive attitudes towards willingness to compromise and reach peace agreements than minority oppressed groups, suggesting that they may have less extreme views towards political violence (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, Rapaport, et al. 2016).⁹ Furthermore, as noted above, research on the asymmetry of majority-minority attitudes finds that majority groups tend to have weaker ethnic identity or are less likely to think of themselves in terms of their group membership, which is potentially important in generating support for political violence and conflict (Sidanius et al. 1997; Pintel 1999; Fearon and Laitin 2000).

The above analysis does not preclude dominant majority groups from participating in or supporting political violence - it is clear that many dominant majority groups rely on state and paramilitary violence to suppress minority groups. Therefore, as demonstrated in chapter 2, there are likely to be many who identify with dominant communities (e.g. the unionist-loyalist community in Northern Ireland) who support political violence. However, for majority groups there are reasons why they might not want to openly admit supporting political violence. Firstly, through their domination of politics and political institutions they have a monopoly on violence and control distribution of resources, and therefore they are likely to discourage non-state political violence which would challenge their position. In many cases, they have large electoral majorities or have manipulated the political process to ensure they maintain control, and thus it is in their interests to channel political conflict through for-

⁹Although this effect may be driven by differing levels of exposure to political violence

mal political institutions. This is clear in the case of Northern Ireland, where ‘gerrymandering’ of electoral constituencies was a common practice to ensure unionist political control (Johnston 2002).

At the same time, it is common for dominant majorities who control the state to secretly collude with paramilitary groups to attack and suppress the oppressed minority. This also occurred in Northern Ireland, with unsealed documents revealing there was collusion between the unionist dominated police force, the British army and loyalist paramilitary groups (McGovern 2019). This combination of control of the political arena alongside clandestine collaboration with paramilitaries is likely to lead to majority group norms which entail concealing true support for political violence in public whilst supporting it covertly, leading to a situation in which open support for political violence is lower than actual support.

Secondly, given dominant majority groups control the government, they are responsible for foreign relations including building relationship with other countries, political leaders and businesses. Often these foreign governments and businesses face pressure from citizens and customers not to collaborate with countries where there are authoritarian governments who use violence to repress their citizens or where there are accusations human rights abuses (Hendrix and Wong 2013; Keck and Sikkink 1998). Therefore, it is in the interests of dominant majority groups in power to disavow political violence publicly in order to build relationships with other governments and invite business investment, even whilst privately collaborating with clandestine paramilitary groups. This again leads to norms where political violence is publicly disavowed but is used and supported privately to repress minorities.

As a result, we would expect that minority groups who are excluded from political power, face significant oppression from state forces, and are led by

political elites who participate in political violence, are likely to cultivate norms which lead group members to openly support political violence. Conversely, groups who control political institutions, have a monopoly on state violence, and are led by political elites who have supported political violence clandestinely rather than openly, are likely to cultivate norms which reject political violence publicly, even where they support it privately.

In summary, historically oppressed groups led by political elites who participated in political violence will be more willing to openly support using political violence. Conversely, historically dominant groups who are led by political elites who publicly opposed political violence will be less willing to express open support for political violence.

- **H1 - Minority Oppressed Group:** No difference between support for political violence as measured by an open question relative to a list experiment.
- **H2 - Majority Dominant Group:** There will be higher levels of support for political violence expressed through a concealed list experiment relative to an open question.

3.3 How conflict and age shape norms

In addition to specific group norms, there are also likely to be norms which develop in society more broadly. Obvious manifestation of this are differences between countries or regions of the world (e.g. east-west, collectivism-individualism) and differences across generations (Dalton 2015; Daatland, Herlofson, and Lima 2011; Wray-Lake, Arruda, and Hopkins 2019). Research on political generations by Dalton (2015) highlights the large differences which can

manifest in political attitudes, participation and partisanship. One additional example of intergenerational norms are those linked to conflict. Research consistently highlights that people who grow up in a conflict environment, particularly intergroup conflict, can develop strong group identities and antagonistic intergroup attitudes which persist long after intense conflict has abated (Bar-Tal 1998; Hadzic, Carlson, and Tavits 2020; Nair and Sambanis 2019). This phenomenon is often referred to as ‘conflict socialization’. These attitudes, such as the justness of one’s goals, in-group unity and the permissibility of political violence, can be understood as group norms. These norms cultivated as a result of conflict socialization may cause those who grow up during conflict to have higher levels of support for political violence (Bar-Tal 1998; Tint 2010).

However, not only are there clear differences in norms across generations which may extend to attitudes towards political violence but there is also research which shows that the effect of social desirability in answering questions can vary by age and generation (Kim and Kim 2017; Silver, Anderson, and Abramson 1986). This strand of research indicates that older people ‘are prone to giving socially desirable answers’ (Kim and Kim 2017). One explanation for this phenomenon is that older people are more susceptible to ‘impression management’, the tendency to try to control the image others develop of you (Singh, Kumra, and Vinnicombe 2002; Kim and Kim 2017). Understanding the effect this might have on reporting honest attitudes towards political violence is complex, particularly given the potential effects of conflict socialization. For example, in Northern Ireland, older generations may have grown up during conflict so have been socialized into conflict attitudes. However, even during conflict, political violence was generally seen as unacceptable and rejected by the majority of the population. It was criticised by almost all media outlets and those involved were imprisoned and condemned. The strength of main-

stream societal ostracising of those involved in political violence can be seen in the ban on broadcasting interviews with anyone even loosely connected to the republican movement in Northern Ireland, including their political wing, Sinn Féin; a ban which remained in place until the early 1990s (Edgerton 1996). This widespread public condemnation of political violence and ostracising of those involved is likely to lead to norms against openly expressing support for political violence among those who lived through it. This effect is likely to be even stronger for older generations who have a greater tendency towards image management and social desirability bias (Kim and Kim 2017; Silver, Anderson, and Abramson 1986).

The combined effect of conflict socialization and widespread mainstream condemnation of political violence could lead to paradoxical patterns of support for political violence in post-conflict societies, where older generations who have lived through conflict simultaneously have higher levels of support for political violence but also greater propensity towards hiding these attitudes. It is important here to differentiate between general conflict socialization and direct exposure to violence. Although these are related, the effect of direct exposure to conflict violence is likely to be more intense, and as shown in chapter 2 can lead to higher levels of open support for political violence. Therefore, the effect of social desirability bias may not be the same for those with direct exposure to conflict violence. As a result of their direct personal trauma, rather than general conflict socialization at a societal level, they may be more willing to openly express support for political violence.

As a result, older generations who have lived through intergroup conflict will have higher levels of support for political violence but are more likely to conceal it. Whereas for younger people we should see no difference between open and concealed support

- **H3:** Older people who grew up during intergroup conflict will express more support for political violence through a concealed list experiment relative to an open question

3.4 The Northern Irish Case

The research carried out for this chapter is focused on Northern Ireland. Applying the above analysis to Northern Ireland, we can make the hypotheses regarding the role of group identity in concealment of attitudes towards political violence more specific. The historical context and salient group identities in Northern Ireland are outlined in detail in the introduction section. However, it is useful to further elaborate on the historical experience of the two major communities in order to understand how norms around political violence were cultivated.

As outlined in the introduction chapter, the salient cleavage in Northern Ireland can largely be divided into Catholic, Irish, nationalist and republican on one side, and Protestant, British, unionist and loyalist on the other.¹⁰ Due to their connection with the British establishment, Protestants have dominated Irish and subsequently Northern Irish political and economic life, including control of state apparatus such as the police force. Conversely, Catholics have suffered from significant oppression (O’Leary 2000; Maney 2007; Byrne 2015).

Prior to the creation of Northern Ireland, this oppression led to a number of rebellions from the Irish republicans, most of which failed, but were seen as noble sacrifices for Irish freedom (O’Leary 2000; Shanahan 2008). The creation of Northern Ireland further perpetuated this oppression and by 1971 Northern

¹⁰There are important differences between these group identities and they do not fully overlap (as discussed in detail in the introduction and further in chapter 2).

Ireland had erupted into widespread political violence, continuing until 1991 at a severity level which meets the traditional definition of a civil conflict of ≥ 25 battle deaths per year.¹¹

3.4.1 Divided communities, different norms

Applying the theoretical framework developed above we can elucidate how different norms regarding political violence have developed across this cleavage in Northern Ireland. As noted, Northern Ireland has been historically dominated by the unionist community who have controlled state power, including the main political institutions and the police. In fact, Northern Ireland was created in its current form due to intense Protestant opposition to the possibility of a Catholic majority in Ireland, and with the purpose of ensuring Northern Ireland maintained a Protestant dominated majority (O’Leary 2000). This was reflected in the makeup of the Northern Irish police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), which was still only 7% Catholic at the latter end of the troubles in the 1990s, despite Catholics making up 38% of the Northern Irish population (Ellison and Smyth 2000; Li and O’Leary 2007). Due to the fact that unionists controlled government and therefore had a monopoly on state-sanctioned violence, they primarily relied on the police and military to enforce their control on Northern Ireland. As a result, since the creation of Northern Ireland and unionist domination of the state, unionist political leaders have generally rejected and condemned political violence, at least in public, and there are very few significant political leaders in contemporary unionist politics who had direct involvement in militarism. In fact, some leading unionist parties and politicians refused to participate in peace talks due to the role of Sinn

¹¹Many date the violence back to 1968, however, in 1971, it meets the criteria of civil conflict according to UCDP/PRIIO (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, et al. 2002).

Féin who they viewed as ‘unrepentant and armed terrorists’ who would now be ‘at the heart of the government’ (McAuley 2004). However, despite this public stance, there is reliable evidence that unionist political leaders, and many in the general public, were aware of and facilitated clandestine loyalist paramilitary groups (McGovern 2019).

Since the end of the troubles extensive documentation has been released which reveals varying degrees of collaboration between the unionist dominated police, politicians and parts of the British army (McGovern 2019). Although this was denied at the time, there were accusations of collusion throughout the troubles, and there was significant public awareness of these accusations (Cochrane 2013). In fact, a seminal history on loyalist paramilitaries during the troubles concludes that collusion was so widespread that British military figures saw ‘no conflict in dual membership between the military and the largest Loyalist paramilitary group’, the UDA (Cochrane 2013; Bruce 1992). Collusion with paramilitary groups can occur for a number of reasons, including more straightforward interactions such as information sharing, however, a key reason for collaboration in Northern Ireland (and other contexts) was the ability of paramilitary groups to carry out action which state forces were precluded from doing due to ‘legal and organizational constraints’ (Cochrane 2013; Bruce 1992). In other words, paramilitary groups could carry out acts of political violence which would be seen as too extreme for state forces or could damage the reputation of unionist political leaders, but they would be facilitated in doing so by state forces.

The extent of this collusion or facilitation varied, but it included importing arms for loyalist paramilitaries and providing intelligence in relation to potential targets (McGovern 2017; Rolston 2005). As a result, unionist norms around political violence combined a public rejection of political violence by political

elites and reliance on traditional state forces to control the nationalist community, whilst also colluding with clandestine paramilitary groups using political violence against the Catholic community (both specific targets and civilians). This likely led to norms against publicly supporting political violence, whilst privately supporting it.

While the Protestant community have been dominant in Ireland and latterly Northern Ireland, the Catholic community have suffered from significant oppression. Without tracing the full history of colonisation and religious discrimination in Ireland, those who identify as Catholics have faced extensive oppression and state-sanctioned violence over a number of centuries (O’Leary 2000). This oppression has led to various nonviolent and violent struggles for liberation and Irish independence. The violent struggle for Irish independence has been embedded in republican identity, with many viewing it as necessary for each generation to take up arms to fight against British oppression. This narrative of a blood sacrifice and celebrating the heroes of previous rebellions has, over time, led to political violence being viewed by many in the the republican community as laudable and necessary (Dalton 1974). Although the centrality of ‘blood sacrifice’ and similar narratives have been overstated in some accounts of political violence in Northern Ireland, there is clear evidence that this influenced those who chose to join the IRA during the troubles in Northern Ireland (Shanahan 2008). Therefore, the perception of political violence as laudable, and even incumbent on those who identify as republican, is present through centuries to the recent conflict in Northern Ireland.

In addition to the historical importance of political violence to the nationalist community, there are also potentially strong effects of elite activation and cues which have persisted into contemporary Northern Irish politics. Specifically, Sinn Féin, who are now the largest political party in Northern Ireland are

understood as the ‘political wing’ of the IRA, the largest republican paramilitary group (Taylor 2014). Furthermore, until relatively recently Sinn Féin were led in the Republic of Ireland by Gerry Adams and in Northern Ireland by Martin McGuinness, both of whom are generally understood to have sat on the IRA’s Army Council, which is the decision-making body of the Provisional IRA (Taylor 2014; Patterson 1990).¹²¹³ For an extended period of time after the Good Friday Agreement from the late 2000s until his death in 2017, Martin McGuinness was the leader of the second largest party in Northern Ireland and was the second most powerful politician as Deputy First Minister.¹⁴ Furthermore, the effects of elite cues may also continue through to the current leader of Sinn Féin, Michelle O’Neill. Although too young to be directly involved in the conflict, Michelle O’Neill’s father was a member of the Provisional IRA as were two of her cousins, demonstrating the continuing relevance and influence of connections to historical political violence (McDonald 2017; News 2017). Furthermore, in a recent interview Michelle O’Neill went as far as stating openly that ‘there was no alternative’ to IRA violence (Meredith 2022). This clearly demonstrates the elite willingness to openly endorse political violence, and the potential influence of political elites.

Based on the above, we would expect that those who identify with groups from the historically oppressed Catholic community would be more willing to openly admit supporting political violence due to the deep historical reliance on political violence to achieve their goals, and the involvement of significant

¹²Elaboration of the differences between the IRA and Provisional IRA are not necessary for this chapter

¹³Gerry Adams has never admitted to involvement in the IRA, but there is significant evidence and testimony from other IRA Army Council members that he sat on the army council (Patterson 1990).

¹⁴Although Martin McGuinness latterly condemned political violence when he turned to politics, the impact of the most important nationalist politician being a former paramilitary fighter has strong elite cues regarding political violence and also shows the general acceptance for participation in political violence amongst the wider nationalist community.

political leaders in paramilitarism. Conversely, we would expect that those who identify with groups on the dominant Protestant will be less willing to admit openly supporting political violence, even if they do support it privately.¹⁵

Therefore, applying H1 and H2 to Northern Ireland we would *expect that for individuals who identify groups related to the Catholic community (i.e. Irish, Catholic, nationalist, republican) there will be no difference between support for political violence as measured by a direct question relative to a list experiment. Conversely, individuals who identify with groups related to the Protestant community (i.e. British, Protestant, unionist, loyalist) will express greater support for political violence as measured through a list experiment relative to an direct question.*

In terms of generational effects, the troubles in Northern Ireland continued at a relatively intense level until the early 1990s. Therefore, anyone who was born earlier than 1980 is likely to have had higher level of conflict socialization and thus be more supportive of violence. However, they were also exposed to more condemnation of political violence and because they are older they are more susceptible to image management and social desirability bias (Singh, Kumra, and Vinnicombe 2002; Kim and Kim 2017) As a result we would expect older people to have higher levels of support for political violence, but also feel greater social desirability bias against expressing this openly.

Therefore, applying H3 to Northern Ireland, older people (primarily those born before 1980), who lived through the troubles, will express more support for political violence as measured by a list experiment relative to a direct question.

¹⁵These effects should apply to all identities on both sides - Catholics, Irish, nationalist and republican on one side, and Protestant, British, unionist and loyalist identifiers on the other.

3.5 Methodology

As noted above, social science research often focuses on attitudes which are taboo or sensitive. Researchers have long known that respondents are sometimes unwilling to answer these questions, and if they do, may conceal their true opinions (Glynn 2013). This effect is known as social desirability bias, which is the propensity of individuals to respond to sensitive questions with answers which are likely to be viewed favourably by the researchers and others who may become aware of their answers. As argued in the previous section, the likelihood of an individual concealing their true opinions is influenced by social norms cultivated in society. Furthermore, the effect of this can significantly distort results and thus policy interventions (Glynn 2013; Silver, Anderson, and Abramson 1986). This propensity appears to affect respondents irrespective of format in which questions are asked, with research showing that social desirability exerts an effect over responses similarly in-person, paper and online survey responses (Dodou and Winter 2014).

In order to combat the effect of social desirability bias on survey responses, researchers have developed a variety of experimental techniques to elicit more truthful answers. One promising technique for overcoming this propensity is the list experiment. List experiments are a simple and unobtrusive method for revealing attitudes which are potentially influenced by social desirability bias (Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997; Blair and Imai 2012). Rather than asking respondents to directly state what their opinion on a given topic is, they are shown a list of statements and asked how many they agree with. Providing there is a mix of mundane and potentially sensitive statements on the list,¹⁶

¹⁶Whilst it may seem like including other sensitive topics might affect responses, these serve to distract respondents from the specific topic of interest and we can use statistical tests to ensure they do not bias the response to the topic of interest. These are discussed in

respondents feel secure that the researcher (and others) do not know their true opinion on the specific sensitive topic of interest.

A particular variant of the list experiment is known as the item count technique, under which respondents are randomly assigned to a list of control statements + sensitive statement (i.e. treated), or just the list of control statements (i.e. control). For example, respondents will either see 3 control statements + 1 sensitive, or just 3 control statements. They are then asked how many statements they agree with from the list. Using this experimental technique, respondents do not have to openly state that they agree with a controversial opinion and researchers can compare the average level of agreement across the treated group (3 control + 1 sensitive statement) with average level of agreement among those shown the control statements (3 control statements). Given randomization ensures that treatment and control units are similar on all observable and unobservable characteristics, any difference in the average number of statements agreed with between these groups can be attributed to the sensitive item. Therefore, the difference between the number of statements agreed with is the proportion who agree with the sensitive statement. For example, if control group on average agrees with 2.21 items on the list and the treatment group (i.e. control + the sensitive statement) agrees with 2.55, the difference is 0.34, indicating that 34% of the respondents agree with the sensitive statement.

For the purposes of this research, the list experiment was designed as follows:

1. The minimum wage should be higher
2. People in same-sex relationships should be allowed to get married.¹⁷

the results and appendix

¹⁷We included an additional sensitive statement in order to distract attention from political violence as the potentially sensitive topic. We can validate later that responses to these control statements did not bias the analysis

3. There should be less investment in education and healthcare.

+

4. *It is acceptable to use violence to achieve important political objectives.*

In addition to revealing the true proportion of the population who agree with a sensitive statement, this chapter is particularly interested in comparing those who are willing to reveal their true opinion on a sensitive issue with those who choose to conceal it. Specifically, it is focused on identifying social groups who may systemically report lower levels of support for political violence in responses to a direct question versus a list experiment. In order to estimate these differences, this survey includes a traditional survey question asking respondents openly whether they support political violence. We can then compare answers to the list experiment versus the direct question. In particular, we can analyse differences in response patterns across various groups (Traunmüller, Kijewski, and Freitag. 2019). Lastly, through recent analytical advances we can use statistical methods to run multivariate regression models with the list experiment as the dependent variable (Blair and Imai 2012; Imai 2011).

As outlined in the introduction, the data used in this paper was collected as part of a survey focused on attitudes towards political violence, distributed online in March - April 2021 to adults living in Northern Ireland.¹⁸ As noted above, social desirability bias in survey responses has been shown to be prevalent in online surveys in addition to in-person (Dodou and Winter 2014). Therefore, we would expect that social desirability should impact responding to the direct question on support for political violence, but that respondents will answer the list question more honestly.

¹⁸Further information on the survey is available in the introduction and the appendix to this chapter and chapter 2

3.6 Results

The first results we present here are the levels of support for political violence as measured through the list experiment compared to the levels of support as measured through the direct question presented in chapter 2. These results presented in Table 3.1 and show a significant difference between list and direct – whilst the direct question indicates 9% of the population support political violence, this jumps by a third when measured through the list experiment to 12%. For an attitude which has such low levels of support generally, an increase of a third is significant, and if we extrapolate to the Northern Irish population this is equivalent to an extra 60,000 people supporting political violence than was indicated by the direct question.

Table 3.1: Support for violence as measured by list experiment

	Mean (direct)	Mean (list)	Difference
All	0.09 (0.01)	0.12 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Standard errors in parenthesis			

3.6.1 Group identities

Although the difference in population level support for political violence as measured through the list versus direct question is important and highlights that there is significant concealment of attitudes towards political violence amongst the population, we are particularly interested in exploring whether there are specific subgroups who are more predisposed to conceal their attitudes. We first focus on the effect of different group identities. Figure 3.1 presents the difference between the level of support for political violence as measured by the direct question versus the list experiment across key identities aligned with the

two main communities in Northern Ireland.

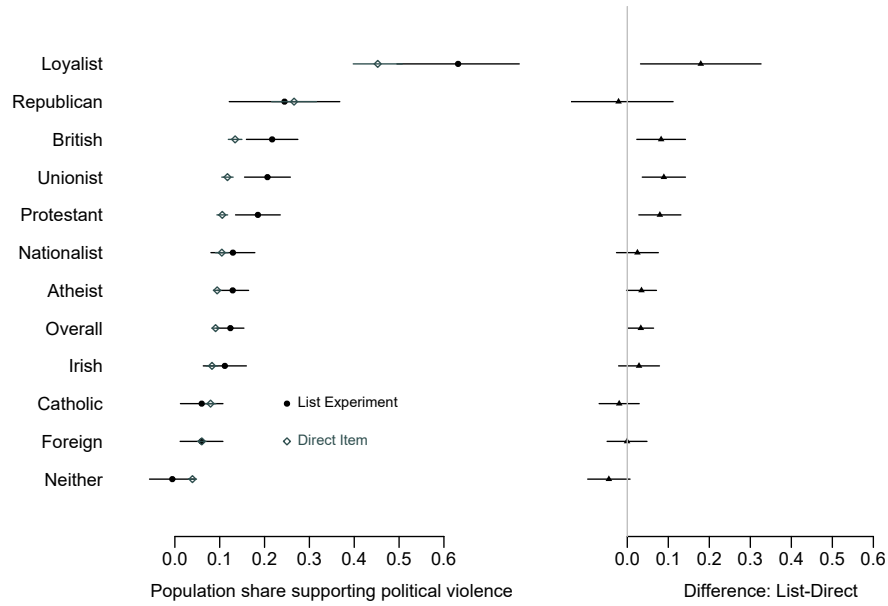


Figure 3.1: This graph displays the difference between responses to direct question versus list experiment across variables related to intergroup relations. 95% confidence intervals displayed.

The left hand side displays the level of support for the list and direct item, whilst the right side displays the difference between these two measures and whether it is significant. Figure 3.1 displays the results for different identity groups within the population, including political, religious, national and more extreme identities such as republican and loyalist. The results display a very clear pattern relating the impact of social identities on concealment of attitudes towards political violence. All identity groups associated with the unionist community – this includes unionist, loyalist, British, Protestant – show a significant difference in the level of support for political violence as reported through a direct question versus a list experiment. Consistently across all these groups, irrespective of underlying support for violence, there is a tendency amongst a significant proportion to conceal attitudes towards political violence when asked directly. Conversely, we see no such effect for any identities associated with the

nationalist community – this includes nationalist, republican, Irish, Catholic – there is no difference between attitudes reported through the direct question versus the list experiment.

The results show that those who identify with groups linked to the historically oppressed Catholic community which have historically engaged in political violence and have leaders who participated in political violence are willing to admit it openly. Although it is still only a minority of these groups, those who do support violence feel no social pressure to conceal this opinion. This effect is the same for those who identify with political, social, religious or even more extreme identities associated with paramilitarism. Although there is significant variation in the levels of support between these groups with significantly higher support amongst republicans, there is no evidence of any tendency towards concealing these views. This provides robust support for H2.

However, the results are very different for those who identify with groups linked to the historically dominant Protestant community. Figure 3.1 shows that a significant proportion of individuals who identify as unionist, loyalist, British and unionist concealing their support for political violence when asked directly. Again, this effect is present irrespective of the underlying support for political violence amongst these groups, with the effect clear for the smaller radical groups. Specifically, support for violence amongst loyalist far outstrips other groups with more than 60% of those who identify as loyalist supporting political violence when measured through the list experiment. This provides further support for the argument made in chapter 2 regarding the importance of understanding these smaller radical subset or splinter groups who are linked to the larger national or ethnic groups. This provides clear support for hypothesis one.

The exact differences in levels of support for political violence can be seen in

Table 3.2: Difference in support for political violence amongst important group identities as measured by list experiment versus direct question

	Mean (direct)	Mean (list)	Difference
All	0.09 (0.01)	0.12 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Unionist	0.12 (0.01)	0.21 (0.05)	0.09 (0.05)***
Nationalist	0.10 (0.01)	0.13 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)
British	0.13 (0.02)	0.22 (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)***
Irish	0.08 (0.01)	0.11 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)
Loyalist	0.45 (0.05)	0.63 (0.13)	0.18 (0.15)***
Republican	0.27 (0.05)	0.24 (0.12)	-0.02 (0.13)

Identities associated with the unionist community highlighted in **bold**. Standard errors in parenthesis. Significance indicated by *** is at <0.001 level.

Table 3.2. Here we see the level of concealment amongst unionist communities. For loyalists the difference in levels of support for political violence as measured by the list experiment versus direct question is 18%, showing the extent of potential measurement error when using a simple direct question.¹⁹ Similarly for unionists, the level of support is almost double when measured by the list experiment. Conversely, for those who identify as republican the difference is negative, although not significant. This highlights that those who identify as republican feel no impetus to hide their support for political violence.²⁰

Outside the two main communities, there is no significant difference in levels of support for political violence among those who identify as neither (i.e. not aligned with either community), or those who are foreign born. Interestingly, foreign-born people and those who identify with neither community have the lowest levels of support for political violence amongst all social identity groups which emphasises the importance of politically relevant group identity for political violence. Those who identify as atheist have slightly higher support;

¹⁹It is important to note that given the smaller sample of individuals who identify as loyalist that the confidence intervals and standard errors are also larger here

²⁰There may even be individuals who feel like they should state that they support political violence when asked openly even if it does not reflect their true attitudes. This interpretation should be taken with a significant degree of caution given the confidence intervals are quite large and overlap)

however, this should not be particularly surprising given there was a significant portion of the Republican movement with strong left wing ideologies (e.g., Marxist). This group rejected religion, including Catholicism, despite the strong overlap between Catholic identity and nationalism.

3.6.2 Conflict socialization

The above analysis highlights the way in which group identity and norms affect propensity to conceal true support for political violence when respondents are asked about their attitudes in an open question. In this section we turn to the effect of other factors in shaping concealment of attitudes. We are interested primarily in the combined effect of age and conflict socialization. Although a ceasefire was declared in 1994 and the peace agreement not signed until 1998, the conflict had receded to the point that it no longer reached the conventional 25 battle-deaths threshold by 1991.²¹ Given this, 1990 can be considered as the de facto end of civil conflict. Research highlights that political attitudes start to mature in adolescence, therefore, we code those over the median age in the survey (≥ 44 years old) as exposed to intergroup conflict and others as not exposed to conflict (Rekker et al. 2015; Sawyer et al. 2018)

We see a relatively clear trend here - those over the median age appear to have lower levels of support for political violence when asked directly, however, when asked through the list experiment, we can see that their support for violence is actually significantly higher. Given this group have much higher levels of conflict socialization growing up during The Troubles, we would expect them to have higher levels of support for political violence, but it is only through the list experiment that we see this effect accurately. This chapter argues that this

²¹From 1991 until the peace agreement (i.e., 7 years), the number of deaths was 39. (Sundberg and Melander 2013).

concealment is due to the combined effect of higher levels of image management amongst older age groups combined with greater exposure mainstream criticism of political violence during the troubles. This effect would have been amplified by the ostracization of those who were involved in political violence (e.g. the national broadcast ban which barred those involved in the republican movement from speaking on radio and TV), which may have led to social desirability bias against openly supporting political violence.

For younger respondents we see that the effect is in the other direction although insignificant, indicating that due to growing up in relative peace has led to overall lower levels of support for political violence and less reticence about expressing those views, potentially driven by lower levels of image management and less exposure to mainstream critiques of political violence.²² Therefore, young people have lower levels of support for political violence than older people when measured through the list experiment, and those that do support political violence do not conceal their attitudes.

3.6.3 Gender and support for political violence

Beyond conflict socialization and age, there are other variables which appear to influence concealment of attitudes towards political violence, the most striking of which is gender. Whilst men appear to have higher levels of support for political violence when asked directly, we can see that there is no difference between their levels of support when asked through a direct question versus a list experiment. Conversely, there is a significant difference between support for political violence amongst women when measured by the list experiment versus the direct question. In fact, the discrepancy we saw between men and women

²²This difference between older and younger people could potentially be explained by the greater propensity for risk taking amongst younger people. Unfortunately, we are unable to differentiate between these explanations using the current data.

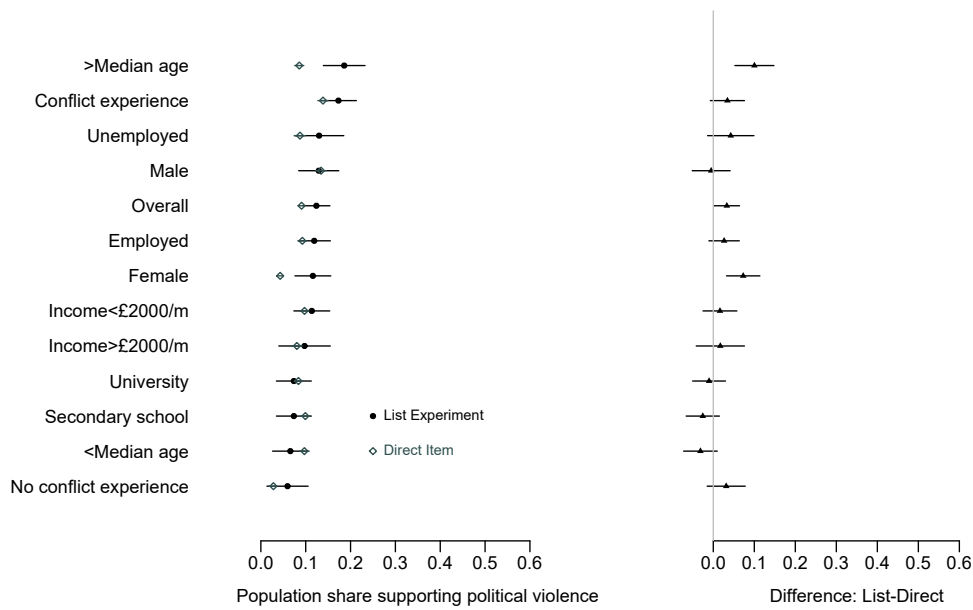


Figure 3.2: This graph displays the difference between responses to direct question versus list experiment across demographics and socialization variables. 95% confidence intervals displayed.

in chapter 2 when measured via the direct question disappears completely when analysed using the list experiment. This is a provocative finding, particularly when considered alongside research from (Kalmoe 2013) which indicates that gender differences in support for state violence cannot be explained by underlying differences in aggressive personality. It suggests that women feel the need to conceal their support for political violence when asked in an open question, unlike men who are willing to express support political violence openly.

What explains this concealment of attitudes towards political violence by women? Firstly, there is existing evidence that there are differences in the way social desirability affects men and women. In particular, women tend to have higher ‘endorsement’ propensity (i.e., the tendency to attribute socially desirable characteristics to oneself) (He et al. 2015). Secondly, in many cultures there are norms which associate masculinity and violence with men, and the opposite for women (Moradi and Parent 2013; Courtenay 2000). These stereotypes are of-

ten upheld and perpetuated through the membership of armed groups, which are overwhelmingly male. Even where women join armed groups, research indicates that they ‘typically perform non-combat tasks that are gender-stereotypical for women in their society’ (Tarnaala 2016). In short, women are generally socially excluded from armed groups and even where they do join, their roles are generally non-combatant. Conversely, it is more acceptable and sometimes expected that men will volunteer to participate in war or intergroup conflict, with men who join armed groups often lauded as heroes. These stereotypes and traits associated with gender, masculinity, and political violence are likely to manifest in the social expectations around expressing support for political violence, with men more willing to openly admit to supporting political violence (or may feel pressure to support it even when they do not), whilst women may be more reticent about openly expressing support for political violence. These norms around gender and violence may help to explain the results presented above.

Table 3.3: Difference in support for political violence amongst different demographic groups.

	Mean (direct)	Mean (list)	Difference
All	0.09 (0.01)	0.12 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Female	0.04 (0.01)	0.12 (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)***
Male	0.13 (0.01)	0.13 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.005)
>=45 years	0.09 (0.01)	0.19 (0.05)	0.10 (0.05)***
<45 year	0.10 (0.03)	0.07 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)

Standard errors in parenthesis.

The extent of the difference between responses in the direct question versus list experiment for gender and age are presented in Table 3. For women, the effect is extremely large - the levels of support for political violence increases threefold, from 4% to 12%, when measured in the list experiment. Similarly for those over the median age, the level of support more than doubles from 9%

to 19%. Conversely, for men, the effect is close to zero, and for those below 45 years old, they report slightly lower levels of support for political violence when measured through the list experiment, but the confidence intervals overlap so this is not significant. This highlights the size of the effect across different demographic groups, emphasising the extent to which certain demographic groups conceal their true attitudes regarding political violence, due to the effect of perceived norms and social desirability bias. Given these are not small social identity subsets but large demographic groups, the absolute difference in the number of people who support political violence is quite significant. Policies and interventions designed to tackle political violence based on only the direct question would not only underestimate the extent of the challenge but would also potentially neglect large segments of the population who conceal their true attitudes.

3.6.4 Exploratory multivariate regression models

The analysis above highlights how groups within society conceal their attitudes towards political violence which is important for accurate research and policy-makers who need to direct resources towards tackling radicalization. However, the challenge with the difference-in-means estimator used above is that we cannot ‘efficiently estimate multivariate relationships between preferences over the sensitive item and respondents’ characteristics (Blair and Imai 2012). Therefore, although having a more accurate understanding of concealment is important, there is obviously significant overlap in some of these groups. This is particularly the case for different group identities – for example, although unionist and loyalist have important differences, a large number of loyalists also identify as unionists (as discussed in chapter 2). Similarly, around half of all these identity groups tend to be female. Therefore, in order to understand what factors

actually determine support for political violence, we can run a multivariate regression model to estimate the individual determinants of support for violence using the list experiment data. These results extend the analysis presented in chapter 2 which focused on determinants of support for political violence using a direct question through similar regression models but using responses to the list experiment as the outcome of interest.²³

For the purposes of this analysis we rely on multivariate regression estimators for list experiments developed by Imai (2011) and Blair and Imai (2012). Given the relative novelty of these methods it is important to highlight that this analysis is exploratory and the estimates are potentially not as reliable as standard regression models (Traunmüller, Kijewski, and Freitag. 2019; Blair and Imai 2012). The outcome variable here is support for violence as measured by the list experiment. Following Blair and Imai (2012), the analysis presented use a linear model (LM) and nonlinear least squares (NLS) models for estimation (Blair and Imai 2012). Prior research on analysing list experiments has shown that NLS models are ‘easier to interpret and more robust’, but do not satisfy range restrictions, which is why we run linear models also (Blair and Imai 2012; Imai 2011). More information on the estimators can be found in Imai (2011) and Blair and Imai (2012). Notwithstanding the exploratory nature of this analysis it can provide some useful insights and guidance from a policy standpoint in terms of the risk factors for supporting political violence.

In terms of hypothesised relations, we can use the results from the direct question analysed in chapter 2, and the analysis of the list versus direct question presented above, to make some loose predictions. First, we would still expect small radical identities associated with paramilitary violence (i.e. loyalist and

²³This analysis does not invalidate the results in chapter 2, and the importance of understanding both open and concealed support for violence will be discussed in the dissertation conclusion and shown through the analysis in C3.

republican), which were the most important determinants of support for political violence in chapter 2, to continue to be the most strongly correlated with paramilitary violence, even when measured through the list experiment. We would also expect unionist and nationalist identities to be associated with increased support for political violence, as they were in chapter 2, although this effect is will be weaker than for smaller radical identities. However, based on the analysis of the list experiment above, we would expect the effect of unionist and loyalist identities to be stronger than those shown in chapter 2 due to the concealment of attitudes by identifiers with this community. Conversely, as in chapter 2, we would not expect national or religious identities to be significantly associated with political violence, once we control for other identities.

The independent and combined regression models are presented in Table 3.4. Each of these tables include the LM and NLS estimators. As noted above, the outcome variable here is support for political violence as measured by the list experiment. Firstly, looking at the group identity models 1 & 2 in Table 3.4, we can see that the smaller radical identities, loyalist and republican, are positively correlated with political violence. This finding is in line with the discussion in chapter 2. However, the size of the effect is very different for these groups. Loyalist identity has a much larger impact which is significant across both models, whilst the effect of republican identity is slightly weaker and not significant in the NLS models. In most of these models the effect of nationalist identity is similar to republican identity. This is somewhat surprising and indicates that even amongst the nationalist community, there may be some obfuscation of support for violence amongst those who are not part of the smaller radical republican identity group. Conversely, loyalist identity is strongly significant and has a large substantive effect across all models. The only other variable which reaches significance here is Catholic identity, which is the only identity

to consistently reduce support for political violence. Again, this emphasises the importance of closely examining the impact of different group identities as much of the coverage and research often focuses on support for the IRA or political violence amongst Catholics (Hayes and McAllister 2005).

In order to examine the substantive effects, we estimate the predicted probabilities of supporting political violence across different group identities using the combined LM model (M5). The results are presented in Table 7.2 in the appendix for chapter 3. Again, it is important to note that these results are exploratory, but the most striking result here is that 56% of those who identify as loyalist are estimated to support political violence in the list experiment, even after controlling for all other characteristics. Conversely although the effect of republican identity is strong at 23%, a number which is actually quite similar to the effect of nationalist identity. These numbers are a stark contrast to the estimates of support for violence amongst those who identify as Catholic, which is estimated at a meagre 2%. This means that those who identify as republican have a ten times higher likelihood of supporting violence than those who identify as Catholic. As noted, given much of the coverage and analysis of the conflict focuses on religious identity, these results emphasise the importance of a clear theory and methodology which takes into account relevant identities alongside overcoming potential concealment of true attitudes.

Turning then to demographic groups, the results in chapter 2 indicated that gender was an important determinant of support for political violence in the direct question. However, analysis of the list experiment suggests that women significantly under-report their support for political violence when asked in a direct question. As a result, gender may not be a significant determinant of support for political violence using the list experiment. Similarly, the results from chapter 2 indicated that younger people were significantly more likely

Table 3.4: Multivariate regression models estimating support for political violence as measured by responses to the list experiment. Robust standard errors in parenthesis.

	Dependent variable: <i>Support for political violence (list)</i>					
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
	LM	NLS	LM	NLS	LM	NLS
Unionist	0.11* (0.06)	1.75 (1.63)			0.11* (0.06)	3.45 (6.71)
Nationalist	0.17*** (0.05)	2.09 (1.73)			0.17*** (0.06)	3.71 (6.68)
British	0.07 (0.05)	0.46 (0.72)			0.04 (0.05)	0.20 (0.74)
Irish	0.04 (0.05)	0.85 (0.91)			0.02 (0.05)	0.71 (0.89)
Loyalist	0.49*** (0.09)	2.44*** (0.75)			0.46*** (0.09)	2.30*** (0.83)
Republican	0.14** (0.07)	1.13 (0.88)			0.12* (0.07)	0.69 (0.86)
Catholic	-0.12** (0.05)	-1.50* (0.82)			-0.14** (0.06)	-1.31* (0.76)
Protestant	-0.01 (0.06)	0.13 (0.94)			-0.01 (0.06)	0.05 (0.93)
Conflict experience			0.11*** (0.04)	1.13 (0.75)	0.06 (0.04)	1.13 (0.73)
Income			-0.02 (0.02)	-0.17 (0.25)	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.12 (0.22)
Employed			0.04 (0.05)	0.37 (0.70)	0.07 (0.05)	0.34 (0.69)
Age			0.0001 (0.001)	0.02 (0.02)	0.0002 (0.001)	0.01 (0.02)
Female			-0.01 (0.04)	0.32 (0.55)	0.05 (0.04)	0.41 (0.57)
University			-0.11*** (0.04)	-1.22* (0.72)	-0.07* (0.04)	-0.67 (0.56)
Intercept	1.89*** (0.07)	0.54*** (0.06)	1.87*** (0.15)	0.51*** (0.13)	1.96*** (0.16)	0.63*** (0.14)
N	1,570	1,570	1,570	1,570	1,570	1,570

Note:

to support political violence. However, again the results above indicate that this may be because older people conceal their support for political violence. Therefore, age may not be a significant determinant of support for political violence using the list experiment for the same reason.

Looking at other variables included in Table 3.4, we can see how the effect of age and gender differ in responses to the list experiment. Unlike in the direct question in chapter 2, gender and age are no longer significant when political violence is analysed using the list experiment, highlighting the way in which gender and generational experiences affect norms around expressing support for political violence.

Looking at the other variables here, university education is significantly negatively correlated with support for political violence across three of the four models. However, direct conflict experience is not significant in most of the models, including both combined models. This is a surprising effect, which I do not have a clear theoretical explanation for here. It is possible that those with direct conflict experience are radicalized into stronger group identities through the experience of conflict (and therefore the effect is captured by these identities), or that those with stronger group identities were more likely to be targeted or involved with paramilitary violence, and therefore more likely to support it (again this effect would be captured by these identities), and crucially that this is only revealed when the true attitudes are shown using the list experiment.²⁴ However, it is important to note that this is an exploratory analysis and these findings should be treated with some caution, the primary focus of this paper was on examining the influence of group norms on willingness to openly support political violence.

²⁴We are unable to probe the direction of this effect here, but we provide some answers to this in chapter 3 using a quasi-natural experiment.

3.6.5 Robustness

In the above discussion, this paper discusses the tests and design choices used to identify and reduce potential strategic measurement error in the survey (i.e., the no-liars and no design effects assumptions). However, list experiments require cognitive effort. They require respondents to take time to understand the question and the structure of the response, which is non-standard. In this type of situation there is also the possibility of non-strategic measurement error. Non-strategic measurement error in list experiments refers to measurement error that is not related to the sensitive item being measured - non-strategic measurement error (Ahlquist 2015). Non-strategic measurement error may be caused by a variety of other factors, such as misunderstanding the question, boredom, or distractions. An obvious example is termed ‘satisficing’ where respondents give a rudimentary answer to a survey question without fully considering it.

As noted by (Ahlquist 2015), non-strategic measurement error is more problematic when using multivariate regression analysis compared to difference in means (DiM) estimators. Hence, why the analysis presented above prioritises DiM analysis. Furthermore, (Ahlquist 2015) recommend that surveys ask both direct and indirect questions to allow for a comparison and a more accurate overall picture of attitudes towards the sensitive item. Again, this was implemented as part of this research. Ahlquist (2015) also recommends tracking and monitoring respondents broader behaviour in the survey, specifically examining specific time spent on the overall survey and on specific pages.

Non-strategic measurement error is less likely to be an issue in the results presented given the focus here is on differences between groups. Therefore, unless certain groups are more prone to satisficing or boredom than others, it should not significantly affect the results. However, notwithstanding this,

we can account for some aspects. A particular concern in the case of non-strategic measurement error, and list experiments particularly, are respondents who answered the questions too quickly. Unfortunately, the survey does not capture the time spent specifically on the page with the list experiment, but we can use the overall time spent on the survey.

The median time spent answering the survey was 13minutes. There are 51 shortest survey responses which were completed in 6.5minutes or less, which is half of the median, and although it is possible to complete the survey accurately in this time, the respondents are unlikely have devoted sufficient attention to some of their responses. Therefore, as a robustness check to ensure the results are not driven by non-strategic measurement error, we re-run the analysis for the main intergroup model excluding the 51 fastest survey responses. These are presented in Figure 7.3 and Table 7.3. We can see here that most of the point estimates remain similar, and where there are minor changes they do not change the statistical significance of the results. As before, there are statistically significant differences across identities associated with the unionist community, and no statistically significant differences across identities associated with the nationalist community.

3.7 Discussion and conclusion

The chapter proposes that political violence is potentially a sensitive topic for respondents, and therefore, survey responses may be affected by social desirability bias with people concealing their support for political violence when asked directly. In particular, there may be important group norms which are shaped by the historical experience of groups and political elites which influence the willingness of respondents to answer direct questions on political violence hon-

estly. In order to get an accurate understanding of true levels of support for political violence we need to use unobtrusive techniques which allow respondents to feel like their attitudes on the sensitive issues will not be known by the researcher or other people. In this chapter I use an experimental technique called a list experiment to overcome social desirability bias and measure levels of support for political violence more accurately. The primary focus was on comparing responses in the list question to responses to a direct question, which allows us to get a clear understanding of true levels of support for political violence, the proportion of the population who conceal their views on political violence, and differences among key social groups.

The results highlight a number of important trends. First, there is a significant difference in levels of support for political violence when measured through the list experiment versus the direct question. Amongst the general population, the level of support increases by a third from 9% to 12%, which is equivalent to an extra 60,000 people supporting political violence in Northern Ireland. Given recent research indicating that support for political violence is increasing in many established democracies, this finding should further emphasise the importance of accounting for concealment of views on political violence. For example, if these results can be generalized to other contexts, it would equate to an extra 10million people supporting political violence in the USA than would be estimated using a simple direct open question.

Second, there is a clear influence of group norms on propensity to conceal views on political violence. Groups who have been historically oppressed, relied on political violence to achieve political goals, and are led by political elites who were directly involved paramilitary violence, are more willing to openly express support for political violence. These groups have cultivated norms where political violence is viewed as necessary or even laudable, and therefore they do not

feel any perceived social pressure to conceal their views on political violence. Conversely, groups who have historically dominated political power, and criticised the use of political violence whilst facilitating it in private, are less willing to openly admit that they support political violence. For these groups, support for political violence was clandestine and many people within these groups conceal their support for political violence. In Northern Ireland, these groups are respectively aligned with the Catholic and Protestant community. The analysis of responses to the list versus direct question highlight that identities aligned with the Catholic community show no difference in their responses when asked via a list experiment versus a direct question, whilst there is a clear difference between level of support for the list versus direct question for identities associated with the Protestant community.

Third, we can also see that there are certain demographic groups who are more likely to conceal their views on political violence, potentially due to socialization and societal norms regarding political violence. Comparing the direct question to the list experiment, the results indicate that older people and women are more likely to conceal their true levels of support for political violence. Again the effect is quite significant, with support for political violence amongst women trebling when measured through the list experiment and more than doubling for older respondents. This chapter argues that these effects are due to societal norms around gender, masculinity and violence which leads to male domination of paramilitary groups and different expectations around supporting political violence for men and women. The differences amongst age groups are likely due to combination of conflict socialization and exposure to critiques of political violence alongside the greater susceptibility of older people to social desirability and image management. Older people who grew up during intergroup conflict are likely to have been socialized into conflict attitudes but

also exposed to widespread critique of political violence which makes them less willing to express support for political violence openly.

The findings of significant concealment of attitudes towards political violence have potential academic and policy implications. From an academic standpoint, they emphasise the importance of researchers carefully identifying whether the topics they are studying are potentially sensitive and using reliable experimental techniques to overcome misreporting of attitudes. Recent research in the US has focused on overestimation of support for political violence due to the way in which questions are worded, the gaps between attitudes expressed in surveys compared to actual behaviour and misperceptions about out-group partisans' support for violence (Mernyk et al. 2022; Westwood et al. 2022). These critiques have been robustly addressed elsewhere (Kalmoe and Mason 2022a), however, this research emphasises that counter to this view, many people actually conceal their support for political violence in open questions, rather than overstating it. From a policy perspective, estimating accurate levels of support for political violence is critical to ensure adequate investment in tackling radicalization and more importantly identifying where these resources should be targeted. The propensity of certain groups in society to conceal their views makes it challenging to direct resources effectively which could potentially lead to increased radicalization and ultimately political violence which cannot be anticipated and prevented.

As with chapter 2 a key question here regards the generalizability of these findings. As noted, Northern Ireland has a somewhat unique political history, with a relatively recent civil conflict between two ethnic groups, one of which was historically dominant and the other oppressed. Given this oppressor-oppressed dichotomy and the reliance on political violence by the oppressed group to assert themselves is a key component of the theoretical framework, it is likely that the

generalizability of this framework is limited to contexts which share some of these features. However, this is not a particularly unique political structure, in fact, political competition and historical conflict in many countries follows a similar pattern. This framework may be particularly applicable in similar post-conflict contexts where there was recent (or even historical) conflict between two ethnic groups, one of which was politically and/or socially dominant. As noted, recent research in the US has argued that estimates of support for political violence in the US are overestimated, however, it is also possible there is a significant portion of the US population (and in other established democracies) who see peaceful democratic competition as a ubiquitously accepted norm, and who therefore would be unwilling to openly support political violence even if they actually believe it is justified to achieve certain political objectives.

Lastly, the results from the list experiment do not invalidate the analysis presented in chapter 2 or extant research as there are potentially a number of important differences between open and concealed support for violence, particularly in how they affect the likelihood of violence. Open support for political violence may create a social context where violence is accepted and normalized, which makes actual violence more likely. Conversely, if political violence is rejected in public, even where it is supported privately, people are less likely to participate in violence because of the potential social consequences and lack of support. The importance of concealed versus revealed preferences is at the heart of Kuran's (1997) classic work on 'preference falsification' (Kuran 1997). He argues that in a context where individuals falsify their political preferences, particularly where people falsify their preference for an incumbent regime, political change is less likely. The same logic can be applied to political violence, in social contexts where people falsify their rejection of political violence, even if they support it privately, then political violence is less likely. Once individuals

start to believe that other people support violence, this changes their willingness to express it and act accordingly. The importance of these signals and changes is explored further in chapter 4.

It is also plausible that those who openly support are actually more likely to participate in violence, whilst those who conceal their support for violence may be more willing to provide clandestine support for violence. Alternatively, these different attitudes could be linked on a spectrum, which starts with individuals initially rejecting political violence completely. However, then as they are exposed to events or extreme views they support violence but are not willing to admit it openly. Finally, through further exposure or significant events they are willing to admit to supporting violence openly and lastly they may then participate in violence. This would look something like: *Reject violence* $\rightarrow$ *Reject violence openly, support covertly* $\rightarrow$ *Support violence openly* $\Rightarrow$ *Participate in violence*. This research does not have strong evidence to support this continuum, and leaves understanding this further to future research.

The next chapter uses a quasi-natural experiment to analyse how significant acts of political violence affect attitudes towards political violence.

4 Chapter 4: The Effect of Violent Riots on Support for Political Violence?

Abstract

What effect do politically motivated violent riots have on support for political violence? Existing research suggests that exposure to violence can have a detrimental effect on intergroup attitudes and increase support for extreme right-wing parties. However, much of this research is correlational, and it is extremely difficult to replicate exposure to real world violence in an experimental setting. This chapter takes advantage of a survey which was in the field before and during the most significant politically motivated violent riots Northern Ireland has seen in over 20 years, providing a unique quasi-natural experiment. Using an unexpected event during survey design (UEDS) this chapter analyses changes in support for political violence before and after the onset of riots. The results show a significant increase in support for violence among co-partisans of those instigating the riots, but no effect among rival partisans. Through comparing responses to a direct question versus a list experiment, this chapter is further able to show that the change is driven by revealed preferences caused by the onset of riots, rather than an actual change in attitudes.

4.1 Introduction

In early 2021 a group of violent rioters stormed the heart of the US political system (Leatherby et al. 2021; DHS 2021; Beauchamp 2021). Just a couple months later, in March 2021, Northern Ireland experienced weeks of violent rioting, the most significant politically motivated violent rioting since the end of the Troubles (O'Neill 2021). The storming of the Capitol building in the US and prolonged violent riots in Northern Ireland shocked many, and has further catalysed interest in why individuals support and participate in political violence. However, we still know very little about the effect events such as violent riots have on attitudes towards political violence, nor how this is likely to vary across the population (Illing 2021). This is a significant gap, because it is critical to understand whether events like this catalyse further violence or whether the response to these events are a deterrent to participation in similar acts of political violence or protest.

That violence begets more violence is near axiomatic in common discourse,¹ and finds reliable support in conflict literature and beyond (Quinn, Mason, and Gurses 2007; Call 2012).² Explanations for the cyclical and persistent nature of conflict often rely on the deleterious effect conflict has on institutions, intergroup relations, and individual threat perceptions and attitudes towards peace (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016; Besley and Reynal-Querol 2014; Sambanis and Shayo 2013; Beber, Roessler, and Scacco 2014a). These findings would suggest that significant occurrences of political violence might inspire further acts of violence. Yet, most of the existing analysis focuses on country-level outcomes or is correlational, and endogeneity is a significant challenge

¹References to the concept stretch at least as far back as the Bible in Matthew 26:52

²It is also prevalent at a micro level in psychology, criminology etc (Widom 1989; Littman and Paluck 2015)

which is difficult to overcome in an experimental setting because it is challenging to replicate real world violence and because there would be significant ethical concerns about doing so. This chapter leverages evidence from a quasi-natural experiment in Northern Ireland to overcome these challenges and study the effect of political violence on attitudes.

Whilst a survey related to political violence was in the field in early 2021, Northern Ireland experienced the most significant politically motivated violent rioting it has seen since the end of the Troubles in 1998 (Vardy 2021). The proximate trigger of this violence was a police decision not to prosecute republican political leaders for breach of Covid regulations. The violence was instigated primarily by those aligned with the unionist and loyalist community and targeted at police due to the decision not to prosecute. As the riots escalated it spread to many unionist-loyalist areas in the province, receiving intense media coverage both domestically and internationally (O'Neill 2021). It lasted for several weeks and at one stage was so severe that it triggered the first deployment of British army special forces to Northern Ireland since the end of the Troubles (Boscia 2021; O'Neill 2021).

Given the onset of violent riots during the survey, this provided an opportunity to examine the effects on support for political violence. The reliance on unexpected events during surveys (UEDS) to examine the real-world effect of phenomenon have become increasingly common in political science and offer an opportunity to study real-life events which are difficult to replicate in a lab experiment (Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno, and Hernández 2020). I split the respondents into those who responded to the survey before and after the onset of riots, using this as a treatment.³ The results show that support for political violence increases after the onset of politically motivated violent riots, but

³We also operationalize the treatment as a counter of days since the onset of riots

that this effect stems entirely from an increase in support from co-partisans of those instigating the riots (primarily loyalists and unionists in this case). This effect is strong and stable across a range of operationalizations of the dependent variable and model specifications, with support for political violence more than doubling among co-partisans (i.e., unionists or loyalists), taking them from the lowest levels of support for political violence before the riots, to become the joint strongest supporters of political violence after the onset of riots. Conversely, there is no change in support for political violence among rival partisan respondents (e.g., nationalists or republicans) and nonaligned. This chapter argues that this asymmetric change in attitudes towards political violence is likely to be driven by the way in which partisan group identity affects how individuals evaluate and respond to the actions of those participating in the violent riots (Swann et al. 2009; Van Bavel and Pereira 2018; Hollander 2008; Peterson 2017).

The second half of the chapter then explores potential explanations for this change in attitudes. In particular, it leverages classic work on preference falsification by Kuran (1997), which proposes that individual's stated preferences are influenced by what they perceive as socially acceptable (Kuran 1997). However, when these perceptions change, as a result of large political protests or other triggers, this can change willingness to openly express previously stigmatized preferences (Kuran 1997; Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim 2022). In short, the change in support for political violence amongst groups associated with the Protestant community⁴ may not actually be the result of a change in attitudes, but a change in willingness to openly express these concealed preferences. Using the list experiment procedure, this chapter examines whether

⁴The analysis below differentiates between specific identities within each community, however, rather than refer to each individually throughout, they are referred to as groups associated with the Protestant or Catholic community

differences between support for violence as expressed in a direct question versus list experiment change significantly before and after the onset of the riots.

The results provide clear evidence that the change in attitudes is driven primarily by revealed preferences. Specifically, although there is a significant difference in support for violence as measured by a direct question versus list experiment before the onset of the riots amongst those who identify with groups from the Protestant community, this difference almost entirely disappears after the onset of the riots (i.e. there is no difference in levels of support for violence amongst identity groups associated with Protestant community as measured via the direct question versus list experiment after the riots). Conversely, for those who identify with groups from the Catholic community there is no difference in support for violence between the direct question versus list experiment before or after the onset of the riots. In short, a significant number of those who identify with the Protestant community supported political violence before the riots but were unwilling to express it, however after the onset of the riots they are willing to openly express their support for political violence.

This chapter makes a number of significant methodological, theoretical and empirical contributions by using a combination of novel experimental techniques to understand an important phenomenon which is challenging to study in the real world. Firstly, the paper sheds light on an important question in contemporary democracies regarding the effect of widely covered, public acts of political violence on attitudes. It does this through using an unexpected event during survey design which overcomes challenges studying the effect of a dangerous real world phenomenon in an experimental setting. Worryingly it shows that public acts of violence which receive extensive attention in the media have a deleterious effects on public attitudes, increasing support for using violence to achieve political objectives. This suggests that public acts of violence could lead

to a violent cycle gradually increasing support for violence and actual incidents of political violence, which may help to explain recent reporting in the USA (Sargent 2022)

Furthermore, through leveraging a combination of direct questions and list experiments, the chapter indicates that this change in attitudes appears to be driven primarily by revealed preferences rather than individuals changing their actual opinion. The results show that the difference in support for violence between direct versus list almost entirely disappears after the onset of riots for those who identify with groups associated with the Protestant community. From a theoretical perspective the chapter argues that these effects are likely to be driven by co-partisans of those rioting viewing the riots as a signal of support for these tactics within their community. Political violence is no longer seen as a stigmatized preference and individuals are more willing to endorse it. From a methodological standpoint this emphasises the importance of taking into account the sensitivity in the research question and should potentially prompt greater use of list experiments (or similar methods) when studying sensitive questions, even in an experimental setting.

4.1.1 The effect of political violence on attitudes

Understanding how violent riots affect attitudes towards political violence, and how this may vary across different groups is critical for public security and developing effective strategies for reducing support for political violence. Comparative studies of violent attacks suggest a hardening of attitudes and *more* violence in response to exposure to violence. One strand of research on the impact of terrorism on voter behaviour and intergroup attitudes, shows that those living in areas which suffer from terrorist attacks are significantly more

likely to vote for more extreme right-wing parties, and that prejudice increases in the wake of such attacks (Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014; Berrebi and Klor 2008). Furthermore, research on exposure to terrorism and political violence in Israel and Palestine indicates that higher exposure to political violence leads to increased distress and threat perceptions which ultimately reduces support for peace efforts (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, Rapaport, et al. 2016). This is supported by research on the cyclical nature of intractable intergroup conflict which finds that violence perpetrated by one group is often responded to with violent retaliation by the other (Haushofer, Biletzki, and Nancy Kanwisher 2010). Furthermore, psychology research examining the micro effects of violence show that when individuals are exposed to violent attacks at a young age this significantly increased the likelihood that they would use violence in future (Henrich and Golan. 2013). Similarly, in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the analysis shows those with more direct exposure to conflict violence have higher levels of support for political violence.

In terms of the specific effect of riots, there is a strand of literature stretching back to Horowitz's classic book focused on the effect of violent riots, 'The Deadly Ethnic Riots', which examines the effect of riots on attitudes, particularly intergroup relations (Horowitz 2000). In his book, Horowitz posits that violent riots will have a detrimental effect on intergroup relations, but will strengthen in-group relations (Horowitz 2000). However, subsequent empirical research has shown that deadly violent riots and other forms of intergroup violence can actually have a detrimental effect on both intergroup and in-group attitudes (Hager, Krakowski, and Schaub 2019; Zeitzoff 2018). Furthermore, typical cycles of conflict violence appear to extend to deadly ethnic riots, with detailed analysis of the occurrence of ethnic riots in India indicating that one of the most robust predictors of future violent riots is whether riots have occurred

in that location in the past 10 years (Wilkinson 2006). Finally, research on the effect on voting behaviour shows that when ethnic riots occur close to elections it increases the vote share for more extreme religious nationalist parties by 5% (Iyer and Shrivastava 2018).

This rich vein of literature provides important evidence that political violence, and riots in particular, can make public attitudes more extreme, worsen group relations, and catalyse further political violence. However, there are still significant gaps and challenges. Part of the challenge is methodological, because although these studies deploy rigorous statistical and experimental methods, overcoming endogeneity to establish causality, or replicating political violence in an experimental setting is extremely difficult. For example, it is not clear whether groups are targets for violence because they are more extreme or whether violent riots are more likely to break out initially in places where there are tensions and support for violence is higher at the outset. This chapter seeks to overcome this through a quasi-natural experiment which will be outlined later. Secondly, despite a popular understanding that violence begets violence, there is almost no literature which analyses how political violence affects *attitudes towards political violence* and how this might vary across the population, in particular between groups. As a result there are important empirical and theoretical gaps in our understanding of how individuals respond to violent riots. In the next section this chapter explores how the potential effect of violent riots on support for violence is shaped by the identity of the perpetrators and the identity of respondents.

4.1.2 The effect of group membership on attitude change

As noted above, it is clear that exposure to political violence, and specifically violent riots, can affect attitudes and intergroup relations. However, existing research on the psychological effects of conflict highlights that the effects of political violence often differ between groups involved in the conflict, even long after civil conflict has abated (Hirsch-Hoefler, Vashdi, et al. 2021). Therefore, it is possible, and indeed likely, that the effect of exposure to violent riots will differ across groups. Specifically, the effects may vary depending on who is carrying out the violence and who the target is of the violence. For simplicity, we can take a situation in which there is one ethnic cleavage and two primary competing groups, one of which is the primary instigator of the violent riots. Individuals who are members of these groups are likely to respond to riots differently depending on their individual personalities and characteristics, but their group membership is also likely to have a significant effect on their response. The group level effect of violent riots on attitudes towards political violence may go one of three directions: no change in support for political violence; increase in support for political violence, or; decrease in support for political violence. As a result we have two groups (co-partisans of rioters and rival partisans), each of which may respond to the onset of violent riots by increasing, decreasing or remaining unchanged in their support for political violence.

4.1.3 In-group attitude change?

Firstly, considering the impact of violent riots on co-partisans of those rioting, one potential outcome is that violent riots will radicalise other in-group members, resulting in an increase in their support for political violence. This expectation would be in line with existing literature examining the effect of

group membership on political attitudes which shows the attitudes of partisans can depend ‘*almost exclusively*’ on the position of co-partisans, irrespective of the objective content and participants’ own views, and crucially that individuals are willing to change previously stated attitudes in response to partisan cues ‘*even when the new position went against citizens’ previously held views*’ (Cohen 2003; Slothuus and Bisgaard 2020). Widespread violent riots are a strong public signal to other in-group members that there is support for political violence within their group. Given the evidence that people change their views, often to diametrically opposed positions, based on the action of co-partisans, this clear signal may shift the attitudes of co-partisans who were previously wary of, or opposed to, the use of violence. This would result in an increase in support for violence amongst the in-group of those instigating the riots.

Whilst it could be argued that attitudes towards political violence are deeply held and less likely to be influenced by events involving one’s in-group members, there is significant evidence from social identity theory and radicalization research which suggests otherwise. Findings from social identity theory indicate that individuals who have a strong group identity are significantly more likely to endorse action of their in-group, even when this action is considered extreme, including willingness to use violence on behalf of the group and die for the group (Swann et al. 2009). Crucially, rather than deterring supporters, it appears that there is an increase in hate, hostility and references to violence in the days following violent events and that the response is strongly influenced by the perpetrators’ identity (Bliuc et al. 2019; Kaakinen, Oksanen, and Räsänen 2018; Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013). This is supported by work on radicalization which highlights that a key pathway to political violence is through ‘group radicalization’, where members of a group face pressure and competition to demonstrate commitment to the group, and thus willingness to commit acts of

violence on behalf of the group comes to be considered admirable (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008). This dovetails with Sambanis & Shayo’s theoretical model which shows how the violence of extremists can radicalize in-group moderates over time, demonstrating how actual violence can increase support for violence over time (Sambanis and Shayo 2013).

Alternatively, rather than changing attitudes, it might be that public displays of political violence change social norms regarding willingness to openly express a stigmatized view (Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim 2022). As shown in Chapter 3, support for political violence appears to be a stigmatized attitude that some groups in society are unwilling to express openly, with a significant number of individuals who identify with the unionist community unwilling to openly express support for political violence despite the list experiment demonstrating that many do actually support political violence. Therefore, there appear to be group norms against openly supporting political violence among some groups. This phenomenon of individuals hiding their real preferences was termed ‘preference falsification’ by Kuran (1997), who described it as a situation in which individuals express public preferences that differ from their private attitudes, because they believe the publicly stated preference is more socially acceptable (Kuran 1997). However, these perceptions can change radically in the face of significant public events which signal that many others also hold the previously stigmatized view, making individuals more willing to reveal their true preferences (revealed preferences) (Kuran 1997).

Classic research on rapid collapse of preference falsification focused on the disintegration of the USSR, however, it was challenging to support this with individual level data (Kuran 1997). More recent research on attitudes towards nationalism in Spain and anti-immigrant attitudes in the USA have highlighted how these processes can occur in contemporary politics (Bursztyn, Egorov, and

Fiorin 2017; Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim 2022). In the US, respondents in an experimental setting became more willing to openly support a xenophobic organisation when they were informed that Trump was highly likely to win the US presidential election (Bursztyn, Egorov, and Fiorin 2017; Sunstein 2018). In Spain, respondents who were exposed to a higher number of Spanish flags in the wake of the Catalan independence movement, were more willing to openly express support for Spanish nationalism and Franco, a view which had been seen as stigmatized in contemporary Spain after the end of decades of authoritarian rule (Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim 2022).

Both of these results compared attitudes respondents were willing to express openly versus attitudes they were only willing to express when they believed no-one would be able to identify them or their support for the stigmatized position. In both cases, it wasn't that actual attitudes changed, but rather the willingness to express them openly rather than covertly. As noted by Bursztyn, Egorov, and Fiorin (2017), Trump's likely election 'casually changed social norms regarding the *expression* of xenophobic views in the US. Although we detect *no changes in privately-held views*'. These results show that public action which reveals support for stigmatized preference can shift willingness to express that attitude, rather than actually changing the views of others (Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim 2022; Bursztyn, Egorov, and Fiorin 2017). Critically, the change in willingness to express support for Franco and nationalism in Spain occurs amongst co-partisans, specifically those who already identify as right-wing, whilst reducing support amongst those who identify as left-wing (Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim 2022). Therefore, rather than violent riots actually changing the views of co-partisans of those rioting, it may simply make them more willing to express that previously stigmatized preference openly. As a result, we would expect to see an increase in open support for political violence

amongst co-partisans of those rioting, but no change in underlying support.

4.1.4 Out-group attitude change?

Conversely, for out-group members, the effect is more ambiguous. Where the out-group is the target of the riots, and there is serious injury or death, research suggests that ethnic riots can increase support for political violence amongst the targeted out-group (Schutte, Ruhe, and Sahoo 2021). This is supported by psychology research on the effect of fear, and particularly fear of death, which shows that there is an increase in support for political violence and military conflict where an individual has a greater fear for their life (Hirschberger et al. 2016). Therefore, where the out-group are the target of the violent riots, it is likely that this would result in a radicalization of their views and an increase in support for political violence amongst the out-group.

However, where the out-group are not the direct targets of violence,⁵ the outcome is less clear. In this case, the out-group may not feel directly threatened and important group leaders may criticise and condemn the violence. Furthermore, although research shows that there is an increase in support for more extreme parties in response to terrorism, this change in attitudes occurs only in areas which were directly threatened, suggesting that where the out-group are not the direct target there may be no effect (Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014). This absence of a significant threat and fear among the out-group of those rioting, in addition to strong condemnation of the violence by their co-partisans, may result in no significant increase in support for political violence amongst the out-group.

⁵This was the case for the US Capitol riots, and was primarily also what occurred in Northern Ireland

4.1.5 Decrease in support for violence?

The above evidence suggests that we are likely to see an increase in support for violence amongst co-partisans of the rioters, and no change amongst the out-group. However, is it possible that exposure to violent riots will decrease support for political violence amongst either group? Perhaps surprisingly, this is not an uncommon position; as noted by Canetti (2017), ‘there is no shortage of examples of exposure to political violence that lead to pacification and served as a source of empathy and compassion’. The primary evidence for exposure to violence leading to less extreme views comes from support for peace agreements in post-conflict societies, and post-traumatic growth theory. Firstly, there is now significant consistent evidence that individuals who live in areas which are exposed to higher levels of conflict violence are more likely to support peace agreements (Krause 2017; Kreiman and Masullo. 2020). Secondly, psychology research on the effect of traumatic experiences suggests that some people can experience ‘Post-Traumatic Growth’ (PTG) which is associated with increased concern for others, empathy, and empathetic behaviour (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). As a result, individuals who are exposed to traumatic experiences, such as conflict, can see positive changes in their attitudes and behaviour. Can these effects be extended to attitudes towards political violence in response to violent riots?

Unfortunately, more often ‘exposure to political violence seems to be a primary source of radicalization’ (Canetti 2017). Whilst PTG can induce increased empathy it is also often associated with high levels of psychological distress, which is also linked to a desire for retaliatory violence (Hobfoll, Hall, Canetti-Nisim, Galea, Johnson, and Palmieri 2007; Krause 2017). Furthermore, in terms of trauma, for co-partisans of the rioters the experience is less likely to cause se-

vere distress and trauma which leads to PTG, and unless rival partisans are the direct target, the rioting may not result in post-traumatic growth for this group either. Similarly, research on support for peace agreements generally focuses on contexts in which there has been significant continuous violence for the preceding years or decades. Therefore, the prospect of an end to the violence through the peace agreement is likely to be a key factor in the moderation of attitudes for those who are facing the most severe effects of violence. This is supported by evidence from Sudan which shows that exposure to rioting increased support for partition but hardened negative intergroup attitudes, suggesting that exposure increases support for an end to conflict without reconciling group animosities (Beber, Roessler, and Scacco 2014b). Therefore, based on the evidence above, it is unlikely we will see a decline in support for political violence amongst either group.

4.1.6 Hypotheses

In short, how an individual responds to violent riots is likely to be shaped by both their identity and the identity of the perpetrator. Based on the existing evidence, it is likely that there will be an increase in support for political violence amongst in-group members of those rioting. The effect for the out-group might be more ambiguous. In the case here, which will be discussed further in the next section, the outgroup was not the target of the riots and therefore we are unlikely to see an increase in support for violence.

H1: *Violent riots will increase support for political violence among co-partisans of those instigating the riots*

H2: *Violent riots will have no effect on support for political violence among rival partisans (and those who are unaligned) of those instigating the riots*

4.2 Northern Ireland Riots 2021 Context

Northern Ireland has experienced relative peace since the civil conflict (colloquially known as ‘the Troubles’) ended with the Belfast Agreement in 1998. However, the political landscape continues to be dominated by parties representing the two opposing communities involved in this conflict, despite some increase of a third group of ‘*neithers*’ who are not aligned with either community. As outlined in the introduction and discussed in chapter 1, there are a number of overlapping identities associated with each of these communities, including loyalist, Protestant and British on the unionist side, and republican, Catholic and Irish on the nationalist side. Chapter 2 shows that each of these identities is likely to have a different set of norms regarding political violence, and therefore the effect each of these is analysed in the results.

Northern Ireland suffers from a number of social, political and economic challenges which contribute to ongoing tensions, and this fragile situation was exacerbated by two additional events in early 2021 which most analysts believe triggered rioting in loyalist and unionist communities at the end of March: 1. Implementation of the Northern Ireland protocol, and; 2. The decision of the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) not to prosecute any republican politicians for a funeral which is believed to have breached Covid regulations.

The Northern Ireland protocol is a trade mechanism put in place as a result of Brexit which puts a trade border between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. For many in the unionist and loyalist community who believe that the ongoing union between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK is integral to their community and personal identity, the imposition of a border was seen as undermining their connection to Great Britain. The second major catalyst was the decision of the PPS not to prosecute anyone in relation to the funeral of

Bobby Storey, a former member of the Irish Republican Army. Storey orchestrated the largest prison escape in British history and was seen as an iconic figure of Irish republicanism. When he died in June 2020, Northern Ireland was under severe lockdown restrictions, however, large crowds attended his funeral, in breach of Covid regulations. Amongst them were prominent republican politicians, including the leader of Sinn Féin in Ireland (Mary Lou MacDonald) and the leader of Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland (Michelle O'Neill). On March 31st 2021, the PPS recommended that no charges be brought against anyone attending the funeral. This decision was seen by many unionists as a further evidence that the republican community were treated more favourably and is considered to be the final spark which set fire to an already volatile situation.

By the evening of March 31st, large riots had begun to spread across loyalist communities in Northern Ireland, and ultimately continued for several weeks. The initial riots occurred in primarily loyalist and unionist areas and were often focused on police. As the riots escalated, this eventually led to cross-community clashes, however, the riots are generally understood to have been predominantly a signal of dissatisfaction with the political and security institutions, rather than specifically targeting the Catholic community. The riots have been described as the most significant politically motivated riots since the Troubles.⁶ At the height of the rioting, the British army deployed special forces to Northern Ireland for the first time since the Troubles.⁷

Based on this context, groups aligned with the Protestant community are considered the co-partisans (i.e. the in-group) of those rioting, whilst groups aligned with the Catholic community are the rival partisans (i.e. out-group).

⁶The flag protests in 2012 - 2013 were very significant also

⁷Although this was reported in several media outlets it has not been confirmed by the government as The Ministry of Defence does not comment publicly on special forces deployments

Based on the hypotheses above we should expect to see an increase in support for political violence amongst unionists identifiers, whilst the null hypothesis for nationalists is no change in support for political violence.

4.3 Data and methodology

The data used in this chapter was collected as part of a survey focused on attitudes towards political violence.⁸ The survey ran from late March to early April 2021, and just over a week into the survey, Northern Ireland experienced significant violent rioting which resulted in the British army deploying special forces to the province for the first time since the Troubles,⁹ and which were described by some as ‘worse than the Troubles’.¹⁰ This chapter exploits this sudden onset of violent rioting as an opportunity to examine the effect that the onset of violent rioting has on support for political violence. As noted by Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno, and Hernández (2020) using unexpected events during survey design has been ‘frequently exploited to study the effects of important phenomena that cannot be directly manipulated through controlled experiments’ (Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno, and Hernández 2020).

The major rioting which began on March 31st originated primarily amongst loyalist communities (O’Carroll 2021).¹¹ As a result, we consider unionist identifiers as co-partisans of those rioting. Given the discussion in chapter 1 regarding the importance of smaller radical group identities for the cultivation and per-

⁸Further information on the survey can be found in the introduction and in the appendix for chapter 2

⁹This is the colloquial term used to describe the civil conflict which ran from 1970s - 1990s

¹⁰Quote taken from interviews with residents in Northern Ireland <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/violence-in-northern-ireland-it-s-worse-now-than-when-it-was-in-the-troubles-1.4532953>

¹¹As noted previously, the major identity cleavage in Northern Ireland are linked to the civil conflict and have multiple additional layers linked to religion, nationality, and stronger sectarian identities

sistence we also include loyalists as co-partisans in the main analysis. We use March 31st as our cutoff date, with those responding after this date considered in the political violence treatment group.

This chapter proposes that the onset of riots is a quasi-natural experiment. A natural experiment requires as-if random assignment of participants to the treatment and control groups. In order to verify this we ran balance tests of pre- and post-riots covariates which can be found in the appendix in Table 2. Two of these variables showed a small but significant difference: age and gender. Whilst the multivariate models presented below control for both these variables we also ran additional robustness tests splitting the sample by gender and age groups, and running the same set of analysis. These are discussed in detail in the robustness section.

After some basic introductory questions, participants were asked ‘*Do you support using violence to achieve political aims which are very important to you and/or your community?*’.¹² The response was a simple binary Yes or No. We use this as our main measure of support for political violence. In order to analyse the effect of the riots, we create two variables. The first is a simple binary variable which takes a value of 1 for any date after the 31st March, and 0 for any day before. We also create a counter of days since the onset of riots - this takes a value of 1 on 1st April, 2 for 2nd April etc.

For the analysis we use difference-in-means analysis along with a series of regression models. For each of these we analyse changes in the full sample first and then split it by partisan political identity. For the main regression we run two bivariate models with different operationalizations of the riot treatment, and then a multivariate model with a set of controls. The main results presented

¹²This is a broad framing of political violence which may be open to different interpretation, so an additional question was asked later in the survey with a different wording and run the same analysis. This is discussed further in the robustness section.

use OLS, however, we ran logistic regression models also and the results are similar.

The three main regression models are defined below:

- (1) $\text{Support for violence}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Violent riots}_i + \epsilon_i$
- (2) $\text{Support for violence}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Days since riots}_i + \epsilon_i$
- (3) $\text{Support for violence}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Violent riots} + \beta_2 \text{Unionist}_i + \beta_3 \text{Nationalist}_i +$
 $\beta_4 \text{Violent riots}_i \times \text{Unionist}_i +$
 $\beta_5 \text{Violent riots}_i \times \text{Nationalist}_i + \mathbf{X}\boldsymbol{\theta} + \epsilon_i$

Here, $\text{Support for violence}_i$ denotes whether an individual expresses support for political violence. Violent riots_i is a binary variable which shows whether respondents took the survey before or after March 31st. $\text{Days since riots}_i$ is a counter variable which shows the number of days since the onset of riots on March 31st. For the multivariate model we use the same binary riot treatment, whilst Unionist_i and Nationalist_i are binary variables capturing political identity.¹³ The interaction terms between political identity and riot treatment is our main variable of interest for this model. $\mathbf{X}$ is a matrix of covariates.¹⁴ Finally, ϵ_i is the residual.

4.4 Results

The level of support for political violence in Northern Ireland is shown in Table 4.1. Before the onset of violent riots, around 5% of respondents expressed

¹³For the interaction model we use nationalist and unionist identities rather than republican and loyalist due to the low number of observations for these smaller identities

¹⁴These include age, gender, education, income, employment status, and religious identity

support for political violence. To put it in context, this figure is slightly lower than recent research in the USA which finds around 9% of Republicans and Democrats endorse political violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2019). However, there is a large difference across different identities before the onset of riots with nationalist support significantly higher than unionist, 10% versus 3.5%. Conversely loyalist is slightly higher than republican, 19% and 18%, respectively. These results suggest that despite Northern Ireland being a post-conflict society, support for violence is not unusually high and is in line with other established democracies, at least before the onset of the riots.

Table 4.1: Support for political violence in the Northern Ireland before and after riots

	Pre-riots	Post-riots	Difference
Support for violence (all)	0.052	0.133	0.081***
Support for violence (unionists)	0.035	0.192	0.157***
Support for violence (nationalists)	0.104	0.105	0.001
Support for violence (loyalists)	0.194	0.596	0.402***
Support for violence (republicans)	0.176	0.290	0.114
Support for violence (neither)	0.037	0.043	0.006
Observations (all)	822	752	- - -

Table showing support for political violence before and after the riots. T-tests indicate a statistical significance at <0.001 level.¹⁵

Looking then at the impact of the onset of riots, the first row highlights the average support for violence in the full sample before and after the riots. This shows that there is a clear increase in support for violence from 5.2% before the riots to 13.3% after the riots. A simple t-test of the difference in means indicates that this is significant at <0.001 . However, when this is split across the main political groups in Northern Ireland we can see that this increase in support for political violence stems primarily from groups associated with

the Protestant community. In row two we can see that for unionists, support for political violence jumps from 3.5% to 19.2%. Then in row four, we can see that support for violence amongst loyalists increases from 19.4% to 59.6%. Conversely, in rows five and six, nationalists and those who identify as neither (unaligned), there is a minimal difference (0.1% and 0.6% respective), and it is not significant, and similar for republicans where the difference is larger but insignificant.¹⁶

Table 4.2: OLS regression of change in support for political violence

	All Groups	Nationalists	Unionists	Republicans	Loyalists	Neither
Post Violence	0.081*** (0.015)	0.001 (0.028)	0.157*** (0.024)	0.114 (0.106)	0.403*** (0.101)	0.006 (0.02)
Days since riots	0.006*** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.002)	0.012*** (0.002)	0.006 (0.007)	0.035*** (0.006)	0.001 (0.001)
N	1574	468	647	79	83	459

The dependent variable is support for political violence. Positive coefficients denote an increase in support for political violence. In the first column the analysis is run with the whole sample, in the second column only with nationalists, the unionists, and finally people who identify as neither. Standard errors in parentheses bootstrapped with 1,000 draws. *(p<0.05), **(p<0.01), ***(p<0.001).

Table 4.2 shows the results of a bivariate regression on support for political violence. In the first panel, we use a binary indicator which takes the value 0 before the onset of widespread violent rioting, and a value of 1 after. In the first column of the table all respondents are included and the regression results indicates that the onset of riots is associated with higher support for political violence. However, when the sample is split this effect is not significant for nationalists, republicans, or those who identify as neither. Conversely for those

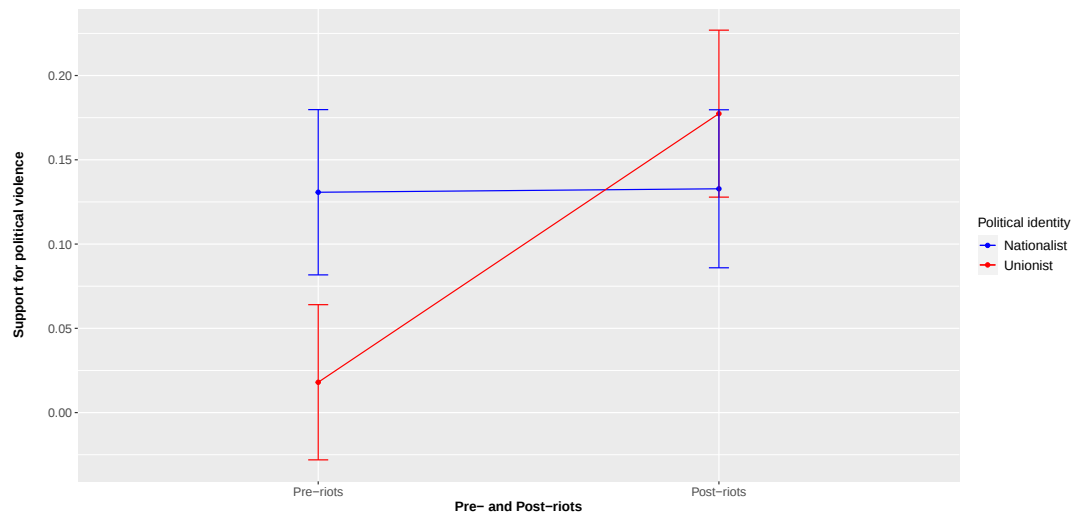
¹⁶It is important to highlight here that results for loyalist and republican should be treated with some caution due to low number observations (these are small radical groups) which means that analysing changes before and after onset in riots has low statistical power.

who identify as unionists or loyalists we see a large and significant increase in support for political violence after the onset of violent riots. In addition to the binary indicator, we also created a variable to capture the effect as the riots continued over the following two weeks. This variable takes on the value of 0 for every day up to the onset of riots, and then adds 1 for everyday after the onset of riots (i.e. later than 31st March). The results for this model can be seen in panel two and indicate that support for political violence among unionists increased over time as the riots continued. The interaction between post-riots and unionist identity can be clearly seen again in Figure 4.1. Figure 4.1 shows the increase in support after riots among unionists, with no significant effect after the riots for nationalists, although nationalists again have higher support at the outset. We also run this analysis for loyalist and republican identities, however, given the low sample size for these groups, the effects are less reliable, particularly when using interaction terms. Despite, this we still see the same effects with a large and significant jump in loyalist support for violence, and no statistically significant difference for Republicans (although the trend is in the opposite direction despite overlapping confidence intervals).

The analysis relies on an unexpected event during survey design, however, due to the sampling approach, there is not perfect random assignment on some demographic characteristics before and after the riots, and therefore, in order to ensure these are not affecting the results, additional multivariable models were run including other relevant variables.¹⁷ These variables include age, gender, religion, education, income and employment status, and with interactions between political identity and onset of violent riots. The full set of results with a range of covariates are shown in Figure 4.3 with a table included in the appendix in Table 8.3. This figure shows that the largest effect on support

¹⁷There are further robustness checks to account for these differences also

Figure 4.1: Impact of riots onset on support for political violence (unionist - nationalist)

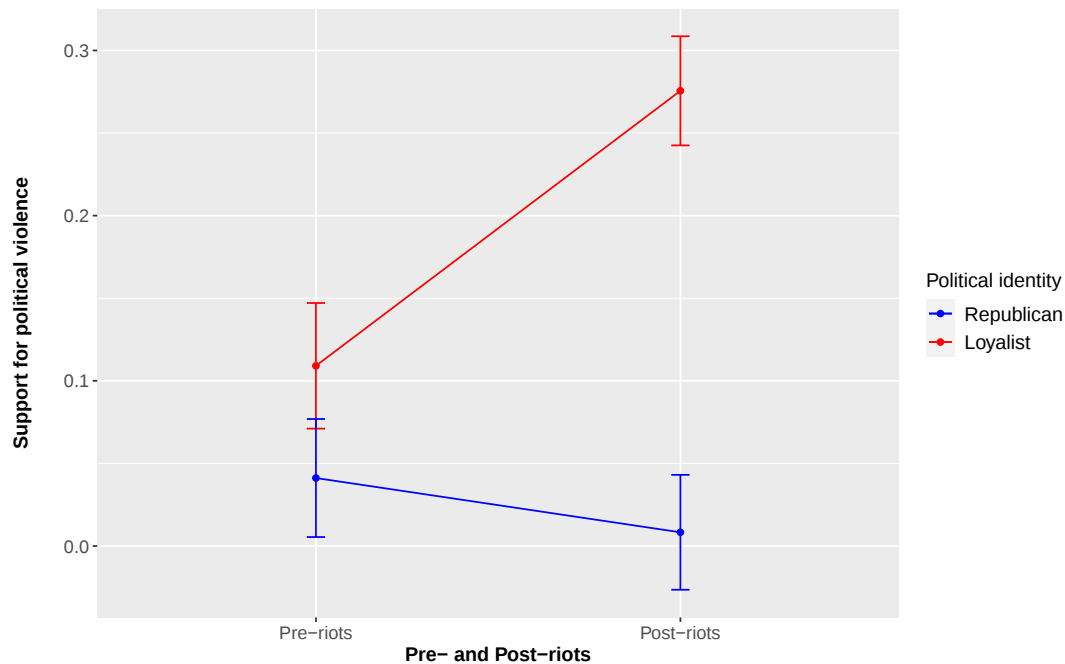


This graph displays the effect of the onset of riots (interacted with political identity) on attitudes towards political violence. 95% confidence intervals displayed.

for political violence comes from the interaction between unionist identity and post-riots. Conversely, despite nationalist identifiers being associated with a generally higher support for political violence there is no interaction effect with the onset of riots.

In terms of other variables of interest, being female and older are the only other variables which reach significance at <0.05 level. In line with previous research from other contexts, being female has a large negative effect on support for violence (or as it more commonly framed, men are an increased risk) (Collier and Hoeffler 2014). Whilst as people get older, their support for violence declines; again, this is in line with prior research which shows that youth bulges increase the risk of conflict (Urdal 2004). However, as shown in chapter 3 these may be due to willing to express preferences openly rather than actual attitudes. Taken together these additional findings echo research on the potential impact of large young male populations on the likelihood of political violence and civil

Figure 4.2: Impact of riots onset on support for political violence (loyalist - republican)

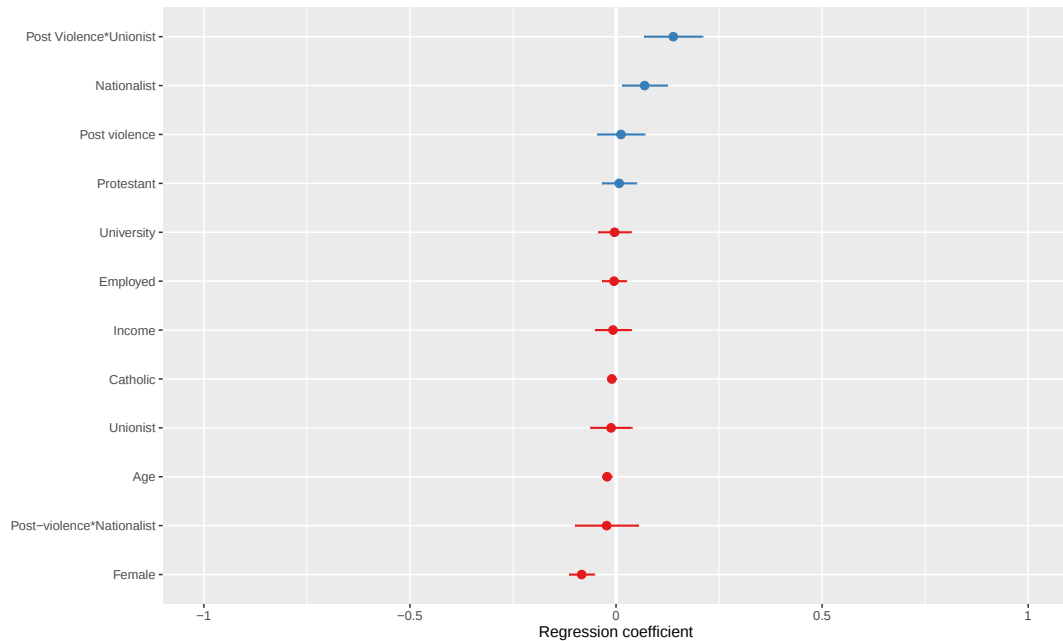


This graph displays the effect of the onset of riots (interacted with political identity) on attitudes towards political violence. 95% confidence intervals displayed.

conflict, although employment here is not significant which is often also noted in these comparative studies (Yair and Miodownik 2016; Urdal 2004; Collier and Hoeffler 2014).

In chapter 2 it was argued that it is important to consider the differing role of identity groups within each community, and specifically in Northern Ireland the role of republican and loyalist identity in shaping attitudes towards political violence. Unfortunately, it can be challenging to study these identities empirically as there are fewer people who identify with these groups weakening the statistical power of the analysis when the data is split for before and after analysis and particularly when using interaction terms. Therefore, the above analysis uses primarily unionist and nationalist identities as these are significantly larger as some of the effects may be difficult to identify with the very small republican

Figure 4.3: Multivariate model for impact of riots on support for violence.



This graph displays the effect of the onset of riots and a range of additional control variables on attitudes towards political violence. 95% confidence intervals displayed.

and loyalist groups. Despite this, and building on chapter 2, we would still expect to see these effects among loyalist and republicans even if the effects are weaker. This was seen in Figure 4.2 presented above and the full results can be found in Table 8.4 in the appendix. Here again we can see that the interaction between loyalist identity and post-violence is significant, whilst the interaction between republican identity and post-violence is not significant. To further explore the differing effects of within community identities, an exploratory model is also run which includes interactions between each of nationalist, republican, loyalist and unionist identity, and the onset of the riots. This model is presented in table 8.5 and the results discussed further in section 8.0.2. In short, it appears riots have a larger effect on the more moderate unionist identifiers than on loyalists, who are already more radicalized.

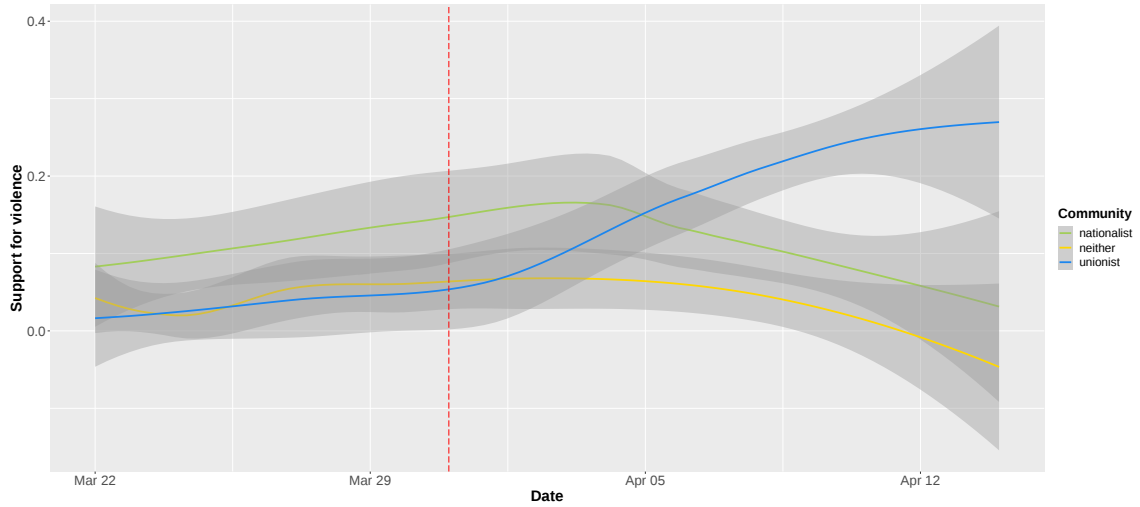
4.4.1 Excludability criteria

In their paper on UEDS, Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno, and Hernández (2020) emphasise that to establish reliable causality between the event and the outcomes of interest, ‘one must assume that the timing of the survey interview does not affect the outcome through any other channel except for the event of interest’. They highlight three potential threats of the exclusion restriction: simultaneous events, collateral events, unrelated time trends. Simultaneous events are important additional events which co-occur with the treatment. Collateral events are other important events which are triggered by the unexpected event focused on in the analysis (for example, a terrorist attack can generate public statements or government action which may also cause important changes in attitudes). In the case presented here, there are important simultaneous and collateral events to consider. First, the decision by the PPS not to prosecute is an important simultaneous event. Is it plausible that this violates the Compound Treatment Irrelevance Assumption? It is clear that the decision of the PPS was an important political event. In fact, it is universally accepted that this decision contributed to the onset of the riots in the first place. Is it likely that this event led to the increase in support for violence? The PPS decision was announced on a single day, March 30th. If this event was the driver of an increase in support for violence we would expect to see a dramatic increase in support for violence on March 31st, April 1st, or potentially the 2nd or 3rd of April at a stretch. Fortunately, there’s a straightforward way of assessing whether this is the case: we can take advantage of the fact that survey responses were collected over time to run a placebo test with survey responses binned by day, and plot support for violence to see if it was already increasing (or not) in the period leading up to the riot. This is exactly what is presented in Figure 4.4.

It is clear from this figure that although the increase in violence begins after the the 31st of March, this is a gradual increase of a number of weeks. The riots ran for several weeks, so it is likely that this effect is driven by the gradual increase in exposure to violence riots, whereas the PPS decision took place on a single day and therefore if this was driving the increase in support for violence we would expect to see a dramatic increase in the first few days of April which quickly plateaus. In terms of collateral events, the primary potential collateral events are political statements and reactions from politicians in Northern Ireland in response to the PPS. Is it plausible that these statements caused the increase in support for violence? The major party criticising the decision in Northern Ireland were the DUP. Their leader, Arlene Foster, called for the head of the PPS to resign and other DUP politicians said the outcome had done untold damage to the reputation of the PPS and police. These are significant political statements, particularly the calls to resign, however, there were no explicit or implicit references to violence, or calls for people to respond with radical action. As a result, it is highly unlikely that they would drive the increase in support for political violence. Furthermore, as with the PPS decision, these statements were generally made within one or two days of the decision. Therefore, if they were driving the effect, we would expect a sharp increase between March 31st - April 2nd which then plateaus. However, as noted, this is not the trend apparent in the analysis.

The final two excludability criteria relate to timing - unrelated time trends and endogenous timing of the event. In terms of unrelated time trends, the temporal analysis presented in Figure 4.4 also addresses the possibility that whatever drove the outbreak of the riots was already driving an increase in support for political violence. In this case, the pre- vs. post-riots comparison is a trend of increasing support for violence among unionists that may have

Figure 4.4: Support for violence over time



This figure displays the change in support for violence over time split by community identity. The red line denotes March 31st, the onset of the riots.

been occurring before the violence broke out (and may have in fact made the violence more likely to occur) rather than the effect of the violence itself. Prior to the riots, there is a very minimal increase or stasis in support for political violence, similar to the nationalist line. However, simultaneous with the onset and continuation of riots, we see unionist and nationalist levels of support for violence diverging - unionist support increases, whilst nationalist (and neither) support for violence declines slightly (although within the 95% confidence intervals). This discontinuity in unionist support for violence after the onset of riots provides further evidence that the riots are the primary driver of increased support for violence, rather than an omitted variable driving both the riots and the increase in support for violence.

Lastly, in relation to endogenous timing of the event. Endogenous timing generally occurs when there is a high degree of control over the unexpected event (e.g., newspaper releasing information about a scandal at a strategic point in the political cycle). In this case, it is plausible that the onset of the riots is endogenous to the increase in support for violence. However, again we see no

evidence of this in the temporal analysis. There is no increase in support for violence in the lead up to the onset of the riots which would suggest that the riots are the result of this, but were triggered by the decision of the PPS and the riots caused the increase in support for violence. Furthermore, the riots in this case were not strategically timed, they were an organic response at a community level to the PPS, and much of the commentary and analysis noted that they were not instigated or controlled by leadership within the Unionist or loyalist community.

4.5 Changing attitudes or revealed preferences?

The above analysis shows clear evidence of a change in attitudes amongst those who identify with the unionist (or loyalist) community. However, as shown in Chapter 3, there is a significant challenge when measuring sensitive attitudes such as support for political violence. In particular, it is possible that individuals are influenced by social norms or what they perceive as socially acceptable. However, what is perceived as socially acceptable can change rapidly in the face of large scale public events (Kuran 1997). This phenomenon whereby large segments of the population hide their true preferences was termed ‘preference falsification’ by Kuran (1997), who used this framework to explain the rapid collapse of the USSR and which was used more recently to explain the wave of protests and regime upheavals known as the Arab Spring (Kuran 1997; Goodwin 2011). In these contexts, the proposed explanation for such rapid change to occur in what were previously seen as relatively stable regimes was that individuals tailor their publicly expressed attitudes to what they perceive as socially acceptable, but as they see others openly express these stigmatized preferences they become willing to express them also. This process of change is termed ‘re-

vealed preferences' where those who were previously unwilling to express their discontent at the soviet or Arab regimes are now willing to do so as a result of seeing others express this view (Kuran 1997; Goodwin and Milazzo 2017).

Applying this to the Northern Irish case here, it is possible that rather than the large and widely covered unionist-led riots actually changing attitudes towards political violence amongst loyalists, that it actually changes what they see as socially acceptable. The large shift in attitudes amongst unionists is then a case of revealed preferences, rather than a change in attitudes. Given the change analysed here occurs over such a short period of time, this may seem like a more plausible explanation than a rapid change in radical attitudes. A similar argument and explanation was proposed by Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim (2022) who suggest that the public display of Spanish flags in Madrid following the Catalan referendum did not trigger a change in attitudes towards Franco, but rather triggered a change in willingness to express this openly. Their empirical approach relied on the differences in attitudes expressed in a direct question versus a list experiment (Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim 2022).

In fact, protests have been explicitly noted as a key mechanism by which the preferences of others in your reference network (i.e. in-group) are transmitted (Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim 2022; Lohmann 1994). In her work on 'information cascades', Lohmann (1994) suggests that cycles of protests and demonstrations in Leipzig were 'an informational cascade that publicly revealed some of the previously hidden information' about attitudes towards the regime in East Germany and the USSR (Lohmann 1994). Again, here the critical change is not a change in attitudes or preferences, but the revelation of previously hidden information about attitudes and the effect it has on others willingness to express these preferences. Furthermore, it is important for this process that the protests communicate some counternormative preference (Dinas, Martínez,

and Valentim 2022). In this case, the violent riots highlight a willingness to use political violence, a position which was perceived by many as a stigmatized view that should not be expressed openly.

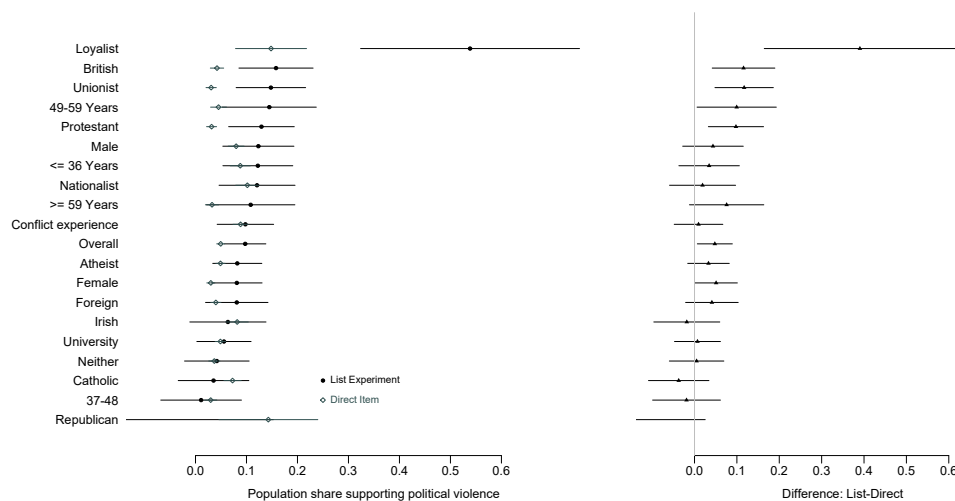
The empirical implication of the above discussion is that we would expect to see a change in willingness to openly express support for political violence after the riots. In this case, given these were riots led by the unionist community, we would expect to see a change in willingness to express open support for political violence amongst unionists. As illustrated by Dinas, Martínez, and Valentim (2022) and in Chapter 3, the primary way in which direct and concealed attitudes can be compared is through a list experiment versus a direct question. Applying this here, we would expect that the difference between support for political violence as expressed through a list experiment versus direct question would decline after the onset of the riot, as unionists become more willing to openly express support for political violence. In summary, the difference in support for political violence as expressed through a list experiment versus direct question will be lower after the onset of the riots than before for groups from the Protestant community. Conversely, there will be no change in support for political violence as expressed through a list experiment versus direct question after the onset of the riots than before for groups from the Catholic community.

4.5.1 Analysis - revealed preferences

In order to analyse changes in willingness to openly support political violence, we compare responses to the direct and list question before and after the onset of the riots. I first present the comparison of direct question to list experiment *before* the onset of the riots in Figure 4.5. As shown in chapter 3, here we can see that there is a significant difference in support for violence as measured by

the direct question versus list experiment amongst identities associated with the Protestant community, with the effect particularly striking for loyalists who have significantly higher levels of support for political violence when measured in a list experiment versus direct question before the onset of the riots. This shows that prior to the onset of the riots there appears to be some social norm or understanding that support for political violence is a stigmatized view which cannot be expressed openly amongst people who identify with the unionist community. Conversely, there is no effect for identity groups associated with the Catholic community (i.e. nationalist, Catholic, Irish and Republican)

Figure 4.5: **Pre-riots** support for political violence - direct vs list.

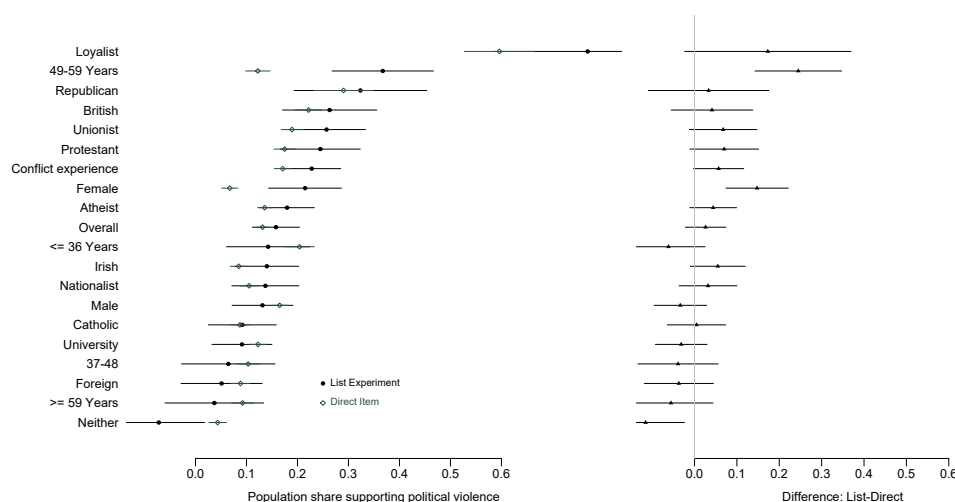


This graph displays difference in support for political violence as measured by a direct question and list experiment before the onset of riots.

We can then compare this to the same analysis conducted after the onset of the riots in Figure 4.6. Here we can see that the previously large difference in levels of support for political violence as measured by the direct question versus list experiment disappears amongst those associated with the Protestant community. Here instead, we can see that there is no significant difference in support for political violence as measured in the direct question versus list experiment for loyalists, British, unionists and Protestants. This indicates that

the apparent change in attitudes found above was actually revealed preferences, with those who supported political violence but previously deemed it socially unacceptable to express this view are now willing to openly support political violence. Conversely, again for identity groups associated with the Catholic community there is no difference in support for political violence as expressed in responses to the direct question versus list experiment.

Figure 4.6: **Post-riots** support for political violence - direct vs list.

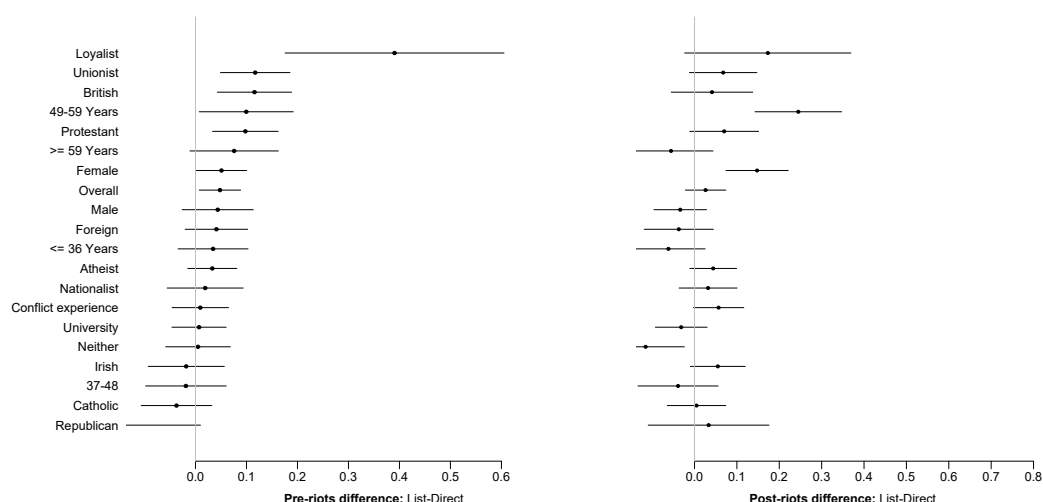


This graph displays difference in support for political violence as measured by a direct question and list experiment after the onset of riots.

In order to compare the difference in support for political violence in the direct question versus list experiment more clearly before and after the onset of the riots, we plot only the differences in Figure 4.7. Here we can see the difference in responses before and after the onset of the riots starkly. In the left panel we can see that before the onset of the riots, there is a significant difference in support for violence as measured by a direct question versus list experiment for identities associated with the Protestant community, with the difference particularly striking for loyalists. Then when we look at the right panel, we can see that the difference between support for political violence after the onset of the riots is no longer statistically significant for these groups,

with no difference in support for violence as measured by the list experiment versus direct question for identities associated with the Protestant community, including loyalist identifiers. Conversely there is no significant change amongst those who identify with groups associated with the nationalist community before and after the onset of riots.

Figure 4.7: Pre- and post-riots **difference** in support for violence between list vs direct.



This graph displays a comparison of the difference in support for violence as measured by a direct question vs list experiment before and after the onset of the riots. Difference between list vs direct pre-riots is displayed in left panel, difference between list vs direct post-riots is displayed in right panel.

4.6 Additional Robustness

A number of robustness checks have already been presented in the excludability section above, this section highlights some additional general robustness checks. The models presented in the main analysis use OLS, however, given our outcome variable is binary we could also use logistic regression. Therefore, we ran the full model 3 again using logistic regression. The results are presented in the appendix in column 2 of Table 3. The results are very similar to the main

results presented.

Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno, and Hernández (2020) also highlight an important ignorability assumption. Specifically, that respondents' treatment status is independent of the outcome. In UEDS it is not possible to control assignment before and after the onset of the event. In this case, the timing of participation is random as there is an online panel who the survey is pushed to over the course of the survey fieldwork without any selection criteria. However, people choose when they respond to the survey, and it is plausible that certain people choose to respond to the survey as a result of particular events. For example, as noted above, the balance tests show a difference in two variables, gender and age. It is plausible that the pattern of response from these groups before and after the event is non-random in a way which affects the reliability of the analysis. In order to ensure this is not the case, we ran additional models splitting the sample by age and gender. For age, we split the sample into above and below the median age, whilst for gender we ran the same models with only male or female respondents. The results are displayed in Table 4 in the appendix and still show an increase in support for political violence among unionists after the riots began.

Relatedly, it is also plausible that there are some unobserved characteristics which we cannot control for which may be due to patterns of response or reachability. Specifically, people who support political violence might be more inclined to take the survey after the onset of the riots. Unfortunately, there is no clear way to identify whether this is driving the effect with the current data, and this is generally best accounted for in the design of the survey fieldwork.

Lastly, Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno, and Hernández (2020) highlight a number of ways by which UEDS analysis can be made more reliability including covariate adjustment and inspection of pre-existing time trends. All of have been assessed

in the above analysis. The results hold with and without covariate adjustment, and similarly the pre-existing trends strongly support the core argument being made.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter uses unexpected event during survey design to examine the effect of politically motivated violent riots on public attitudes towards political violence. Building on social identity theory it argues that responses to political violence are shaped by an individual's group identity and that of the perpetrator. As a result, co-partisans of those rioting are likely to increase their support for political violence, whilst rival partisans and those who are unaligned remain unchanged. Analysing survey responses collected before and during the most significant riots Northern Ireland has seen since the Troubles, the results show that co-partisans of those rioting (i.e. unionists) show a large and significant increase in support for political violence, whilst opponents (i.e. nationalists) or unaligned remain unchanged in their attitudes towards political violence.

The second half of the chapter proposes that the change in attitudes may actually be the result of revealed preferences (Kuran 1997). Prior to the onset of the riots, support for political violence is seen as a stigmatized attitude amongst unionists and therefore there are a number of unionists who support political violence but are unwilling to express this openly. However, the violent riots represent a clear network signal from members of their in-group regarding the acceptability of political violence and therefore those who were previously unwilling to express open support for political violence are now more willing to do so (i.e. revealed preferences). This is analysed through comparing responses to a direct question versus list experiment on support for political violence

before and after the onset of the riots. The results show that although unionists expressed higher levels of support for political violence in a list experiment than a direct question before the onset of violent riots, this difference disappears after the onset of riots.

Therefore, this paper makes two significant contributions to the literature on attitudes towards political violence and social norm change. Firstly, it shows that major displays of political violence, in this case through violent rioting, can trigger significant changes in openly expressed attitudes towards political violence but only amongst the in-group of those rioting. Secondly, it demonstrates that this change is driven not by actual changes in attitudes but willingness to express previously stigmatized preferences openly. The in-group of those rioting seemingly take the violent riots as a very public display demonstration from others in their ‘reference network’ that political violence is a socially acceptable way to express political preferences and pressure for political change.

Unfortunately, due to the nature of the research we were not able to assess the durability of this increase in support for political violence and we do not have strong predictions for the trends into the future. Organisers have already indicated that unrest in the loyalist community in response to Brexit is unlikely to dissipate, with prominent politicians suggesting ending the Northern Ireland protocol, and more protests likely. If these protests escalate into riots similar to those seen in early April 2021, then the threat to Northern Ireland’s peace may be significant.

5 Conclusion

This dissertation sought to theorise about the relationship between group identity and support for political violence, particularly in contemporary peaceful democracies. More specifically, it focused on three main aspects. First, it explores the importance of small radical groups as a key determinant of support for political violence. Second, it analyses how historical experience and elite leadership shape group norms on openly supporting for political violence. Third, it examines how group identity moderates the impact of public acts of political violence on support for political violence. Through these chapters this dissertation examined three main questions:

1. How do different identities affect support for political violence, and how important are small radical groups for understanding these attitudes?
2. Is support for violence a stigmatized preference which leads people to conceal their true attitudes, and how is this affected by group identity and norms?
3. What effect do public acts of political violence have on support for political violence and how does group identity moderate the effect?

This dissertation builds on a rich literature examining the effect of group identity on civil conflict and political violence, and seeks to explore the nuances

and challenges in understanding this relationship, particularly in democracies where there is not an active conflict. The research is focused on Northern Ireland, a relatively stable democratic region of the UK which has maintained peace since the end of intergroup conflict in the late 1990s. The prominent social identities in Northern Ireland are clear and linked to conflict which makes the analysis of the relationship between political violence and identity more straightforward.

5.0.1 Chapter 2 contributions and limitations

Chapter 2 combines classic qualitative work on radicalization and political violence with more recent studies exploring group identity as a key determinant of support for political violence. In doing so, it seeks to resolve a potential mismatch in the role of different group identities in the process of radicalization. The results show that small radical group identities are the key determinant of support for political violence across both communities in Northern Ireland, exerting the largest effect by a significant distance. Republicans and loyalists are six and eight times more likely to support political violence than those who do not identify with these groups, controlling for a range of other group identities and important potential determinants.

This chapter makes a number of contributions to the literature on group identity and support for violence. First, it provides a potential reconciliation of the mismatch between the importance of large groups identified in quantitative literature on political violence, and the centrality of small groups for the process of radicalization. It shows how small radical groups, which are subsets or partially splintered from these larger group identities, are the key determinants of support for violence. These effects hold when other identities

and important demographics are included in the model. This emphasises the importance of considering how different identities influence patterns of radicalization, particularly given the prevalence of multiple overlapping identities in contemporary society. Second, previous studies have often included references to specific identities in their question regarding support for political violence. This research highlights the potential drawbacks of this approach as it may underestimate overall support for political violence, whilst overestimating the importance of the predetermined identities. Third, in addition to the focus on group identity as a determinant of support for violence, it also shows how greater personal exposure to conflict violence significantly increases support for political violence, providing a micro-level explanation for the recurrence of civil conflict and persistence of intergroup conflict. Lastly, from a policy perspective it provides a clearer understanding of how resources should be targeted to combat radicalization. Although the larger identities may play an important role in the perception of grievances, it is smaller groups that pose the greater threat.

Despite these contributions, there are a number of important limitations to these findings. First, as noted in recent critiques of research on support for political violence, it is unclear how respondents specifically interpret references to violence in survey questions. Whilst one respondent might take it to mean homicide, another may include a broader array of action such as rioting. This is a valid critique, and there is a clear necessity for future research to incorporate this into their research designs. Relatedly, the question regarding support for political violence is a binary, which only allows individuals to either support or reject violence. This was an intentional choice in the design in order to ensure a forced choice, but it may obfuscate important variation, particularly regarding those who are unsure. In future, offering an additional ‘Don’t Know’ option on the binary question and combining this with a follow-up question incorporating

a severity of violence scale may address both this challenge and the problems with varying interpretations of what political violence means. This question could also be further explored through more in-depth interviews to understand what political violence means to different people and groups. Third, this chapter does not seek to establish causality. Therefore, it is plausible that the direction of causality runs in the opposite direction (i.e., that people who endorse political violence gravitate towards more radical groups), or more likely, that the relationship is cyclical and reinforcing. Chapter 4 seeks to provide some insights on the direction of causality, but future research could also explore whether priming specific identities makes support for violence stronger. Lastly, it is possible that support for political violence is a stigmatized view and therefore respondents do not answer the question honestly. This would lead to an underestimation of support for political violence. Fortunately, Chapter 3 seeks to address this challenge.

5.0.2 Chapter 3 contributions and limitations

Chapter 3 focuses on whether political violence is a stigmatized preference which causes individuals to conceal their support for political violence due to social desirability bias. If this is the case, it would lead to a potentially large underestimation of actual support for political violence, which might be particularly exacerbated among certain groups due to their historical experience and group norms. In order to analyse this, Chapter 3 relied on a list experiment, and compared these responses to a direct question on support for political violence. The results show that one third of the population conceal their support for political violence. The chapter then analyses how this effect varies across the population depending on group norms. The chapter shows those who identify with dominant groups who have controlled state institutions, and had political leaders

who criticised paramilitary violence in public whilst supporting it secretly, are more likely to conceal their support for political violence. This experience led to group norms against openly supporting political violence. Conversely, we see no effect among oppressed groups who have historically used political violence and have political leaders who participated in political violence (and contemporary political leaders who argue this was necessary).

The analysis also shows that there are other demographic groups who conceal their support for political violence, the most significant of which is women. The increase in support for political violence among women when measured by the list experiment is so large that it eliminates completely the difference in male and female support for political violence as measured through a direct question.

Chapter 3 makes a number of important methodological and theoretical contributions to the literature on political violence and groups. First, it is the only study (to the author's knowledge) to explore whether support for political violence is underestimated in existing research, and utilizes a list experiment to estimate differences in covert and open support for political violence. These results emphasise the importance of considering whether a research topic is sensitive, and therefore whether it is necessary to leverage techniques which address the impact of social desirability bias. Second, it highlights that the propensity to conceal these views is not uniform across the population, but varies significantly as a result of group norms. These results have significant policy implications regarding how resources should be allocated to tackle radicalization, both in who should be targeted and how concealed support for political violence should be taken into account. It is plausible (and possibly likely) that deradicalization will differ for groups who openly support violence compared to those who support it covertly. It also highlights that apparent differences between men and women on attitudes related to political violence may be an artefact of how these

attitudes are measured. Future research should potentially incorporate these considerations into their analysis to understand whether this gendered effect of social desirability bias extends to other important topics.

Before moving onto the potential drawbacks of the analysis and results in Chapter 3, it is important to consider the results from Chapter 2 and 3 together. Although Chapter 3 shows that using a direct question only can result in an underestimation of support for violence, there are potentially important differences in what the results from Chapters 2 and 3 show. The most significant differences are the social implications of these patterns. In particular, open support for violence is likely to lead to more actual political violence relative to concealed support for violence. In order to fully understand this it is useful to briefly cover the concept of preference falsification, which was also discussed in Chapter 4 (Kuran 1997). Preference falsification is where individuals conceal their true preferences on an issue, so there is a disconnect between their true private preference and their publicly expressed preference. In the classic work of Kuran (1997), he argued that preference falsification can allow political regimes to survive even where the majority of the population oppose them. The explanation for this is that individuals will generally not act politically if they believe others do not support their position. The same logic can be applied to political violence. Where individuals believe that others oppose political violence, they are less likely to participate in political violence or support it. Conversely, in communities where political violence is openly supported, individuals are more likely to participate in political violence. As a result, the findings in Chapter 2 may be a better estimation of actual likelihood of political violence. However, Chapter 3 shows that there is potentially a large reservoir of support for violence, should the context and norms change. As a result, it is important to understand and measure both open and concealed support for political violence.

Notwithstanding the above, there are some important limitations of the analysis presented in Chapter 3. First, the main analysis presented in the chapter is only able to show simple measures of support for violence in the list experiment (without controlling for any covariates), and the difference in responses between the direct question and list experiment. The chapter does present an exploratory multivariate regression analysis using the list experiment data, however, this is not as reliable, and therefore the results here should be treated with caution. As a result, whilst Chapter 3 does give us a useful insight into concealment of support for political violence, future research should focus on trying to more accurately estimate individual determinants of both direct and concealed support for political violence. Furthermore, although the list experiment was included early in the survey to ensure greater attention and accuracy, it requires more cognitive effort from respondents and therefore the results may not be as reliable as direct questions. This is a known challenge, and it is a trade-off which was necessary to probe concealed support for violence, but may contribute some additional measurement error.

A challenge for both Chapters 2 and 3 is causality. Both of these chapters are correlational and therefore although the results are significant and relatively robust, we cannot rule out omitted variable bias or reverse causality. For example, although Chapter 2 argues that group identification and conflict exposure are strongly correlated with support for political violence, it is not clear whether these factors caused support for violence, or whether people with higher support for violence are more likely to identify with certain groups and are exposed to greater conflict violence. Fortunately, Chapter 4 steps in to partially address this question.

5.0.3 Chapter 4 contributions and limitations

Chapter 4 seeks to analyse the effect of public acts of political violence on attitudes towards political violence through an unexpected event during survey design. This chapter exploits the onset of high profile politically motivated riots during a survey to analyse what effect these events have on attitudes towards political violence. The paper argues that how individuals respond to political violence will be shaped by the perpetrator's identity, and the identity of the respondent.¹ The analysis shows that public acts of political violence increase support for political violence but only among co-partisans. Conversely we see no change in attitudes among the out-group. The second half of this chapter focuses on whether this change in support for violence was caused by a real shift in attitudes, or whether it made people more willing to express a previously stigmatized attitude. Through comparing responses in a direct question versus list experiment, before and after the onset of the riots, the analysis shows that the shift in attitudes can be explained almost entirely by a change in willingness to express open support for violence, rather than any actual change in attitudes.

The results in Chapter 4 make a number of interesting and potentially significant contributions. Firstly, it combines two relatively novel experimental techniques - unexpected event during survey design and list experiment - to shed light on an important academic and social challenge, support for political violence. The results highlight the destabilizing effect public acts of political violence can have, potentially creating a negative cycle where violence generates more violence. Given the challenge replicating political violence in an experimental setting, it provides important and relatively robust causal evidence for the classic contention that violence only serves to generate more violence. The

¹It is also likely that it will be affected by the identity of the target, however, that factor was not as influential in this case as the main target was the police.

results from the list experiment further emphasise the necessity of measuring both open and concealed attitudes. Without the list experiment, the results would have been attributed to a real change in attitudes, when in fact the effect was driven by a change in willingness to openly express a stigmatized preference. The results again emphasise the importance of taking into account group identity when analysing attitudes towards political violence.

There are again a number of important caveats to these results. Firstly, the analysis assumes that the respondent characteristics are evenly distributed before and after the onset of riots. Although there is balance on most covariates, there are some imbalances. These effects are likely driven by sampling requirements, but may also be caused by different respondents opting in to take the survey as a result of the violence. The robustness analysis seeks to address these imbalances through a number of different models, and although the results still hold, it is challenging to fully account for these effects. Furthermore, similar to Chapter 3, the analysis of the list experiment does not control for other covariates, and although this is potentially less problematic given the research design, it would have been preferable to use a diff-in-diff style model to measure the effect of individual determinants before and after the onset of the riots. However, this is not currently possible using list experiment data. Lastly, although this chapter has a stronger claim that the riots causally generated the increased support for violence, we cannot rule out that other factors caused both the riots and increase in support for violence. Additional robustness tests highlight how support for violence traces the onset and continuation of the riots which provides some reassurance, however, this cannot be completely ruled out.

As alluded to above, the analysis in this dissertation has important policy implications in addition to academic value. They provide an important insight on how differing but related identities shape attitudes towards political vio-

lence. The results emphasize that rather than focusing on large groups such as nationality or religion (which has often been the case with combating Islamist violence), interventions could be better targeted at specific subsets within these broader groups. Furthermore, they highlight that interventions should not focus solely on groups with open support for violence, but should also take into account that certain groups may hide their support for violence, and therefore, are potentially more unpredictable in their actions. The specific challenge of dealing with this is better addressed by policymakers. Lastly, the final chapter highlights the precarious nature of peace and stability. Large incidents of political violence could spark dangerous spirals of violence. In order to avoid this, policymakers should carefully consider interventions to alleviate discontent before it manifests in violence, and also consider how to respond to public acts of violence to avoid a negative spiral. This may also be an important consideration for how the media cover such events.

5.1 Generalizability

A common challenge in research which focuses on a specific context is whether the results can be generalized, and this dissertation is no exception. There are a number of ways in which Northern Ireland could be seen as relatively exceptional. As outlined in the introduction, the intergroup conflict here has long and deep roots which arguably stretch back over centuries. Whilst other countries have some stability in the salient cleavages over time, few are as deeply embedded as Northern Ireland. This makes Northern Ireland a useful country in which to analyse the relationship between group identity and political violence as there is analytical clarity, however, it may limit the applicability to contexts in which intergroup cleavages and conflict are less persistent.

Furthermore, although Northern Ireland is part of the UK, a well-established democracy, Northern Ireland has a specific history of intergroup conflict. Although political violence is not uncommon in other established democracies (the US experienced significant political violence throughout the 60s and 70s), few have experienced civil conflict within the past 30 years. Relatedly, although Northern Ireland has maintained peace since the peace agreement signed in 1998, and there is little evidence that it is likely to relapse into civil conflict, the political institutions have been unstable at times. Similarly, the complex relationship between Northern Ireland, Ireland and the rest of the UK, can undermine aspects of political stability. This creates a complex identity and political structure which is exemplified by the fact that people in Northern Ireland have the legal entitlement to identify as Irish, British or both. There are few other countries in the world where individuals are automatically entitled to citizenship of two different countries through birth.

Despite these significant challenges there is some evidence to suggest that the results have some degree of generalizability to contexts like the US where researchers are worried about increases in support for political violence. First, whilst partisan identities in the US or other contexts are not directly linked to conflict identities as in Northern Ireland, the work of Kalmoe and Mason (2019) suggest that partisans in the United States have similar levels of support for political violence as partisans in Northern Ireland, reflecting the intensity of polarization and conflict in American politics. This indicates that although Northern Ireland has a more recent history of civil conflict, the levels of support for political violence are not radically different from other contexts.

Similarly, although the identity cleavage in Northern Ireland is potentially more stable than in other countries, we do see similar patterns of multiple overlapping identities in a number of other contexts. This can be most clearly

seen in the US, where partisan identities have become aligned with ethnicity, class, religion and even gender to some extent. Furthermore, the relationship between group identity and support for violence show some similarities. There is evidence that higher levels of support in the Republican Party are driven by a specific small subset (i.e., white supremacists).²

Lastly, there is polling data which indicates that responses to the Capitol Riots were heavily conditioned by partisan identity (Walker 2021). This polling data showed that Republicans, and specifically Trump supporters, are significantly more likely to support the Capitol Riots whereas Democrats overwhelmingly oppose them. Although this has not been extended to attitudes towards political violence it is not unrealistic to expect that events such as the Capitol Riots had a similar effect on attitudes towards political violence among Trump supporters, as the Northern Ireland riots had on unionists and loyalists.

Although the US is an obvious comparison given recent events and the highly polarized political climate, the theory and results may be more applicable in other post-conflict contexts, particularly post-ethnic conflict (or even where low level ethnic conflict persists). There are many post-conflict contexts which have been compared to Northern Ireland, including South Africa, Cyprus, Rwanda, Israel-Palestine,³, Sri Lanka or Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are similarities in the origins of the conflict in Israel-Palestine and more importantly there is clear evidence that religious, national class, and political identities often overlap in a similar way to Northern Ireland. Furthermore, as highlighted previously, although the conflict is often seen as religious, there is no direct relationship between religious identity and radical action, and these effects are driven through smaller radical groups (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, and Eiran 2016). Similarly,

²In fact, **kalmoe22** highlight the importance of racial antagonism in driving some of the effects they find regarding support for political violence in the US

³Clearly Israel-Palestine is not post-conflict, but the comparison is frequently made

there is correlational evidence that exposure to violence here also increases support for violence (Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014; Canetti et al. 2017). This suggests that some of the findings presented here might extend to Israel-Palestine also.

There are also striking similarities in history and identity structure in Sri Lanka, where the Sinhalese, who are predominantly Buddhist, have historically held political and economic power in Sri Lanka, while the Tamils, who are predominantly Hindu, have faced discrimination and marginalization. This structure of political power aligned with ethnic and religious identity, resulting in civil conflict, is very similar to Northern Ireland. Furthermore, these cleavages persist into contemporary Sri Lanka (Thurairajah 2020). While the civil war officially ended in 2009, many Tamils feel that their grievances have not been adequately addressed by the government. The government has made efforts to promote reconciliation, including through the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but progress has been slow, and there are ongoing concerns about human rights violations and political repression. There are also concerns about rising tensions between different religious groups in Sri Lanka, particularly between Buddhists and Muslims (Imtiyaz and Mohamed-Saleem 2015). It is plausible in this context that we will see differences in group norms regarding support for political violence similar to Northern Ireland. Specifically, the Tamils, a historically oppressed group who relied on rebel groups to protect themselves (e.g., the LTTE), and who are still excluded from political power, may be more willing to openly support political violence. Conversely, the dominant Sinhalese who are politically dominant may be less willing to openly support political violence in post-conflict Sri Lanka.

In summary, although there are important differences between Northern Ireland and other contexts, there are some striking similarities to the US and

other post-conflict contexts, particularly with regards to identity structures and post-conflict intergroup relations.

5.2 Future research

This study potentially opens up a number of interesting strands for future research. First, and building on the challenge of generalizability, it would be important to see if the findings can be replicated in other contexts. It would be particularly interesting to see the extent of concealed support for political violence in other contexts where violence has been less prevalent than in Northern Ireland - is there more concealment of attitudes towards political violence due to the lack of recent violence? Or are people more willing to openly support it due to the lack of societal stigma? Are there still certain groups who are more inclined to obfuscate their true attitudes? In relation to this, there is also an opportunity to focus more on causal relationships to further explain the results in Chapters 2 and 3. In particular, more interrogation of the interaction between large group identities and smaller groups for the process of radicalization would be welcome. This could potentially be achieved through priming multiple identity independently and together to see how this affects levels of support for political violence. Similarly, when certain identities are primed, are individuals more likely to conceal their views on political violence? In addition to experiments, interviews exploring how people understand their multiple identity groups, particularly in terms of how they relate and interact with each other, and the relationship to political violence would also be important.

Furthermore, our understanding of the difference between concealed support and open support is still limited. This dissertation argues that they are likely to have different social effects, and future research could explore this. Additionally,

there is also a need to understand whether there are substantive differences in the attitudes and behaviour of the people who express support openly versus concealed. Are those who express support for political violence openly more likely to participate in violence? Are they more willing to participate in more extreme acts of violence? As noted above, a broader continuum of support for political violence, rather than a binary, may be useful, although this is challenging to achieve with a list experiment.

The final chapter exploits an unexpected event and it is challenging to replicate this. However, a key finding from this analysis was that there was limited change in actual attitudes but rather a switch from concealed to open support for violence. It may be possible to test what the threshold is for change from concealed to open support through different lab experiments. These studies could prime respondents with different historical information about the in-group/out-group, intergroup conflict, rhetoric from elites or information about attitudes of other in-group members, and collect both open support for violence and concealed attitudes.

Beyond the interaction between group identity and political violence, the effect of gender on concealed attitudes is also notable. Further research should firstly seek to replicate this effect, but potentially also explore whether there are other important sensitive political and social issues where women have a greater propensity to conceal their true attitudes.

6 Appendix to Chapter 2

6.1 Ethical Considerations

The survey used in this analysis was approved by the Ethics Research Committee at Trinity College Dublin. Political violence is a potentially sensitive research topic, particularly in a country which experienced civil conflict in the living memory of some likely participants, despite the period of sustained peace since it was resolved. Therefore, the survey was designed to ensure participants were aware of questions relating to this at the outset. At the start of the survey, participants were presented with an overview of the purpose of the survey and asked to give informed consent. This read:

‘This survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete and we will ask for your views on life in Northern Ireland, policy opinions, and community relations. As part of this you may be exposed to a discussion of political violence.

The survey is completely anonymous which means that we do not collect or save any personal data and are not able to identify specific individuals. Data collected will be used solely for the purposes of academic research and will not be passed on to third parties for other purposes. This research has received ethical approval by the Research Ethics Committee.

You are free to exit the survey at any point if you feel uncomfortable.

Please select yes if you consent to participation and are at least 18 years old.

Although the general population in Northern Ireland are not considered a vulnerable population, and the mention of political violence may prime the subject, it was important to include this to avoid retraumatising those who may have directly suffered from violence during the conflict. They were also informed that participation in the study was voluntary and they could stop the survey at any time. Respondents were also informed about data protection and anonymity of information. Participants were also debriefed at the end of the survey, and given options for support if necessary. The debrief information included:

‘Please contact canavami@tcd.ie if you have any questions, additional thoughts or ideas you would like to share with the research team.

If the survey has caused any distress, below are the contact details for an organisation which may be able to help you.

Samaritans helpline – 116 123 (available for free 24/7 365 days per year)

For further information on the political history of Northern Ireland, and the troubles in particular, please visit the CAIN website linked: <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/>

6.2 A Brief Discussion of the Dependent Variable

The unit of observation in this study is the individual. There has been significant debate recently about how support for political violence in contemporary democracies should be measured in surveys. This debate has largely focused on how respondents interpret question wording regarding support for political violence, and potential disengagement. In particular, Westwood et al. (2022)

suggest that support appears significantly lower once the type of violence is clarified and disengaged respondents are accounted for. As noted previously, Kalmoe and Mason (2022a) have dealt with this critique robustly elsewhere, particularly in relation to the detail and breadth of their findings, however, it is useful to explain the choice of dependent variable for this study briefly. First, a key goal was to keep the question relatively simple and direct, particularly given it was used in combination with a more complex list experiment. Therefore, it does not use the phrase ‘political violence’ which may be interpreted as a distinct concept, but instead ‘violence to achieve political objectives’. In future, it may have been beneficial to include additional clarifying questions in addition to this in order to clarify specific acts of violence. Second, the choice for respondents was binary - yes or no. Although there are clearly problems with not giving respondents the option to select Don’t Know, this trade-off had to be balanced against the possibility that given the sensitive nature of the question, particularly in a context such as Northern Ireland, many would choose Don’t Know as a way to avoid engaging with topic. Lastly, this survey was carried out before the recent debate about accurately measuring support for political violence, and in hindsight, additional questions which captured the strength of this attitude or specific aspects of violence as a followup would have added important nuance and detail.

6.3 Robustness Checks

Table 6.1: Summary Statistics

	Mean	St. Dev.
Female	0.47	0.50
Age	47.47	14.63
Education (1-4)	2.71	0.75
University	0.55	0.50
Secondary School (highest)	0.45	0.50
Income (1-7)	3.5	1.71
Employed	0.67	0.47
Unemployed	0.19	0.39
Married	0.53	0.50
Catholic	0.33	0.47
Protestant	0.42	0.49
DUP	0.19	0.39
Sinn Féin	0.17	0.38
SDLP	0.11	0.32
UUP	0.11	0.32
Alliance	0.21	0.40

Table 6.2: Determinants of support for violence. Full models with both logit and OLS

	<i>Support for violence models</i>							
	<i>Logistic</i>	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Logistic</i>	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Logistic</i>	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Logistic</i>	<i>OLS</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Loyalist	2.37*** (0.28)	0.37*** (0.03)					1.94*** (0.31)	0.32*** (0.03)
Republican	1.78*** (0.34)	0.20*** (0.03)					1.44*** (0.38)	0.18*** (0.03)
Unionist	0.45 (0.34)	0.02 (0.02)					-0.19 (0.39)	-0.02 (0.02)
Nationalist	1.18*** (0.37)	0.06*** (0.02)					0.92** (0.40)	0.05** (0.02)
British	0.80*** (0.26)	0.06*** (0.02)					0.84*** (0.28)	0.05*** (0.02)
Irish	-0.52 (0.33)	-0.03 (0.02)					-0.49 (0.35)	-0.03 (0.02)
Catholic	-0.18 (0.31)	-0.01 (0.02)					0.15 (0.33)	0.01 (0.02)
Protestant	-0.34 (0.30)	-0.02 (0.02)					-0.32 (0.32)	-0.02 (0.02)
Conflict			1.63*** (0.25)	0.10*** (0.01)			1.37*** (0.27)	0.08*** (0.01)
Income			-0.06 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.01)			-0.05 (0.08)	-0.003 (0.01)
Employed			-0.16 (0.27)	-0.01 (0.02)			-0.12 (0.30)	-0.01 (0.02)
Age			-0.25*** (0.07)	-0.02*** (0.01)			-0.25*** (0.08)	-0.02*** (0.01)
Female			-1.32*** (0.22)	-0.09*** (0.01)			-0.92*** (0.24)	-0.06*** (0.01)
University			-0.13 (0.19)	-0.01 (0.01)			0.17 (0.22)	0.01 (0.01)
Pol Confidence					0.02 (0.16)	-0.0002 (0.01)	-0.003 (0.18)	-0.002 (0.01)

Brexit					0.82***	0.07***	0.93***	0.06***
					(0.20)	(0.02)	(0.26)	(0.02)
Left-right					0.04	0.01	0.08	0.01
					(0.10)	(0.01)	(0.12)	(0.01)
Political Interest					0.49***	0.04***	0.25**	0.02**
					(0.19)	(0.01)	(0.21)	(0.01)
Likely Vote					-0.28***	-0.02***	-0.36***	-0.03***
					(0.09)	(0.01)	(0.11)	(0.01)
5-year economic					-0.07	-0.01	-0.02	-0.001
					(0.11)	(0.01)	(0.12)	(0.01)
5-year political					-0.25**	-0.02**	-0.25**	-0.02**
					(0.11)	(0.01)	(0.12)	(0.01)
Constant	-3.30***	0.04**	-1.50***	0.20***	-2.40***	0.09*	-1.80**	0.19***
	(0.28)	(0.02)	(0.46)	(0.04)	(0.59)	(0.05)	(0.83)	(0.06)
Observations	1,574	1,574	1,569	1,569	1,574	1,574	1,569	1,569
Log Likelihood	-410.00		-419.00		-444.00		-357.00	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	838.00		852.00		903.00		759.00	
<i>Note:</i>					*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01			

6.3.1 Linear Models

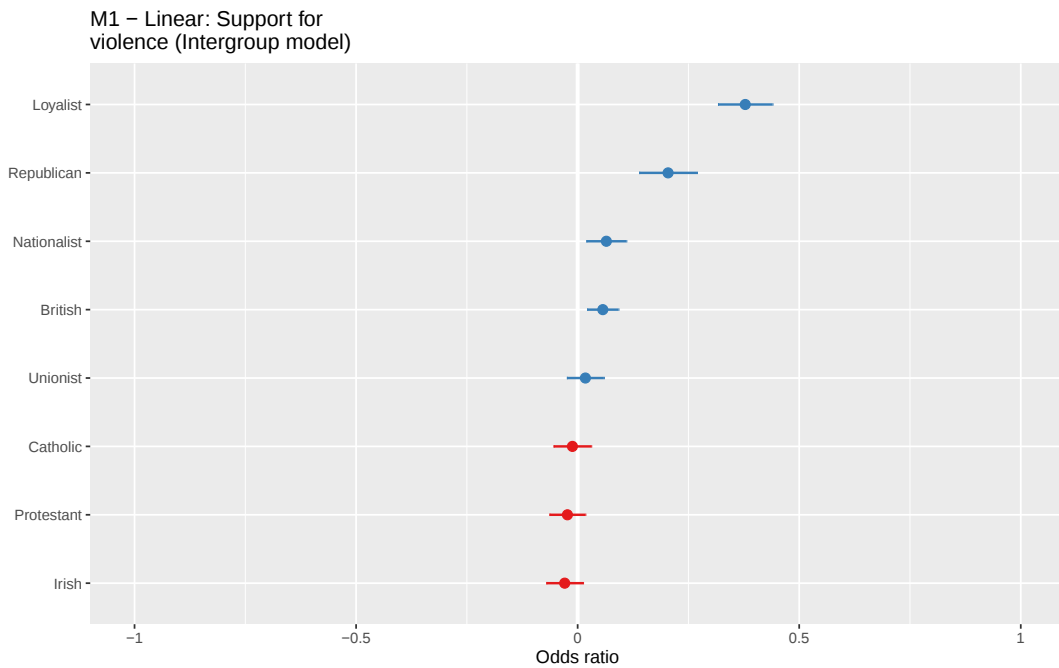


Figure 6.1: Intergroup OLS model.

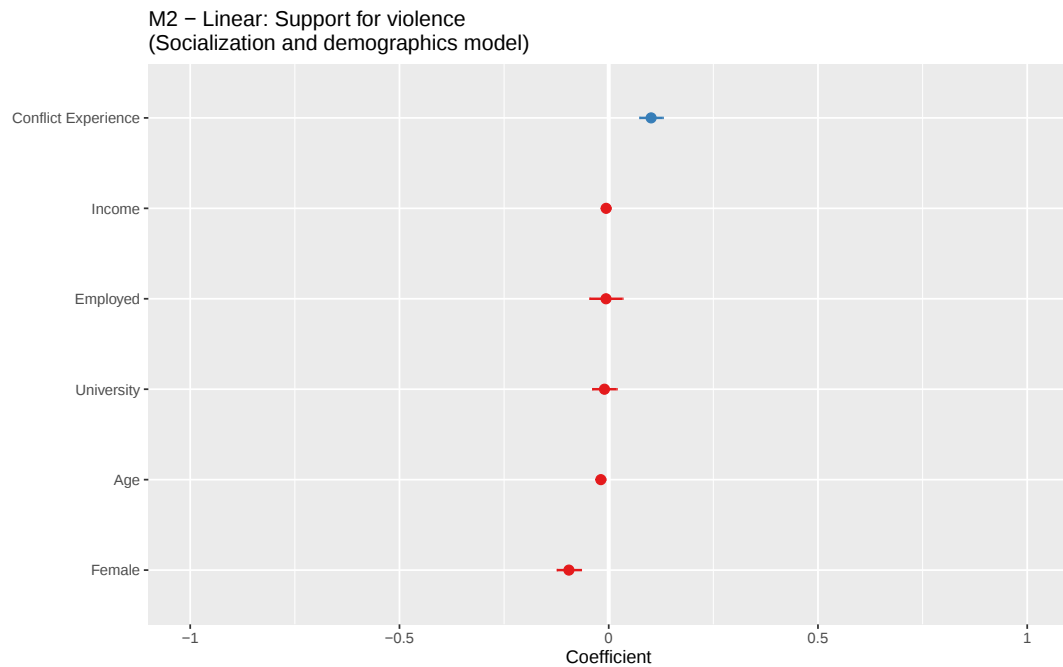


Figure 6.2: Demographics and socialization OLS model.

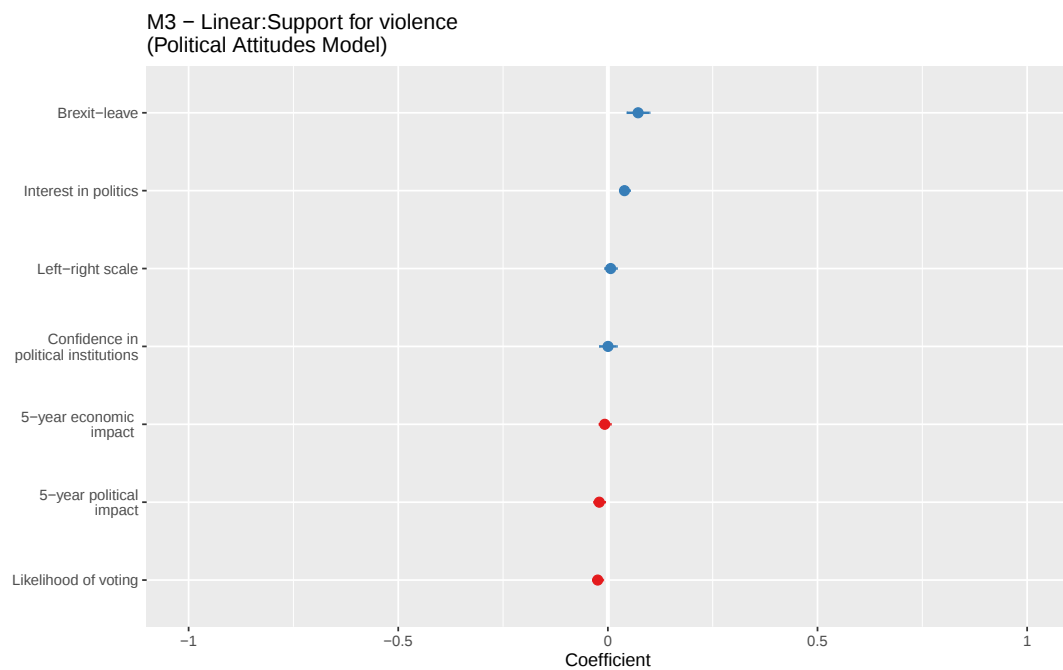


Figure 6.3: Political attitudes OLS model.

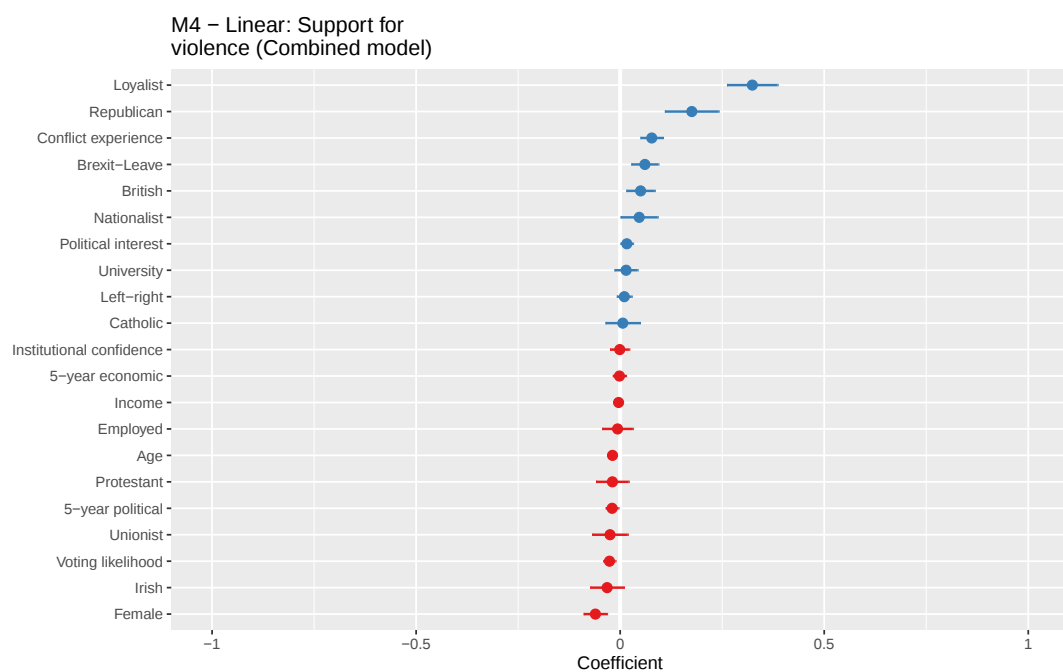


Figure 6.4: Combined OLS model.

Table 6.3: Support for violence *before* the onset of riots. All models are rerun with both logit and OLS

<i>Pre-riots support for violence models</i>								
	<i>Logistic</i>	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Logistic</i>	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Logistic</i>	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Logistic</i>	<i>OLS</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Unionist	-0.38 (0.56)	-0.01 (0.02)					-0.61 (0.60)	-0.03 (0.02)
Nationalist	1.15** (0.47)	0.07*** (0.02)					0.82 (0.51)	0.05** (0.02)
British	0.24 (0.47)	0.01 (0.02)					0.22 (0.50)	0.01 (0.02)
Irish	0.01 (0.44)	-0.002 (0.02)					0.01 (0.49)	-0.002 (0.02)
Loyalist	2.18*** (0.58)	0.17*** (0.04)					1.75*** (0.67)	0.15*** (0.04)
Republican	0.90 (0.70)	0.09* (0.06)					0.49 (0.79)	0.07 (0.06)
Catholic	-0.38 (0.46)	-0.02 (0.02)					-0.11 (0.48)	-0.01 (0.02)
Protestant	-0.47 (0.53)	-0.02 (0.02)					-0.25 (0.56)	-0.01 (0.02)
Conflict			1.89*** (0.45)	0.07*** (0.02)			1.70*** (0.48)	0.06*** (0.02)
Income			-0.10 (0.15)	-0.003 (0.01)			-0.17 (0.16)	-0.003 (0.01)
Employed			0.03 (0.54)	-0.004 (0.02)			0.20 (0.60)	-0.01 (0.02)
Age			-0.40*** (0.13)	-0.02*** (0.01)			-0.29** (0.14)	-0.01** (0.01)
Female			-1.32*** (0.37)	-0.06*** (0.02)			-1.24*** (0.41)	-0.06*** (0.02)
University			-0.09 (0.34)	-0.003 (0.02)			0.25 (0.40)	0.01 (0.02)
Pol Confidence					-0.02 (0.28)	-0.001 (0.01)	0.16 (0.30)	0.01 (0.01)

Brexit					0.32 (0.36)	0.02 (0.02)	0.56 (0.43)	0.02 (0.02)
Left-right					-0.45** (0.22)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.18 (0.23)	-0.01 (0.01)
Political Interest					0.15 (0.19)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.21)	0.002 (0.01)
Likely Vote					-0.39** (0.15)	-0.02*** (0.01)	-0.40** (0.17)	-0.02*** (0.01)
5-year economic					0.41** (0.20)	0.02** (0.01)	0.42** (0.21)	0.02** (0.01)
5-year political					-0.25 (0.19)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.35* (0.20)	-0.02* (0.01)
Constant	-3.15*** (0.36)	0.04*** (0.02)	-1.51* (0.80)	0.15*** (0.04)	-1.43 (1.08)	0.15*** (0.06)	-1.18 (1.44)	0.18*** (0.07)
Observations	822	822	819	819	822	822	819	819
Log Likelihood	-155.49		-144.48		-160.91		-130.63	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	328.98		302.96		337.82		305.25	
<i>Note:</i>					*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01			

7 Appendix to Chapter 3

7.1 A Brief Discussion of the List Experiment Procedure

As discussed in the main paper, list experiments are survey techniques designed to elicit more truthful answers from respondents. The main way in which this is achieved is through allowing respondents to choose a number of statements they agree with rather than directly responding to a question on the topic of interest. Another potential benefit of list experiments is that given there are four statements on different issues, it may not be immediately clear to respondents which question is of particular interest to the researcher, which reduces the propensity to conceal their attitudes on it.

For the purposes of this research, the list experiment was designed as follows:

1. The minimum wage should be higher
2. People in same-sex relationships should be allowed to get married.¹
3. There should be less investment in education and healthcare.

+

¹As noted, we included this additional sensitive statement in order to distract attention from political violence as the potentially sensitive topic. We can validate below that responses were not biased due to these design choices.

4. *It is acceptable to use violence to achieve important political objectives.*

However, a challenge with list experiments is that how individuals respond to the sensitive statement of interest (such as political violence) may also affect how they respond to other statements. The valid interpretation of list experiments is dependent on this not being the case, and was noted by Blair and Imai (2012) who referred to it as ‘the assumption of no design effect (Assumption 1)’. This is likely to occur if respondents evaluation of the control items is affected by the inclusion of the sensitive item, or that they evaluate the statements relative to each other. Although the topics for each statement are distinct and therefore this is unlikely to be the case, it is still an important concern. Fortunately, Blair and Imai (2012) have developed a method to test for potential design effects.

The test designed to confirm assumption 1, no design effects, seeks to identify if there are different propensities to answer control items affirmatively across the treatment and control conditions. If this is the case, it would mean that the difference in items agreed with are not due to the sensitive item (i.e., support for violence) but are caused by changed responses to the other items. The results for the no design effect test is displayed in Table 7.1. In the table $Y_i(0)$ is the (latent) count of ‘yes’ responses to the control items, whereas Z_i is the (latent) binary response to the sensitive item. The null hypothesis here is that there is no design effect. The p-value of 0.98 indicates that we cannot reject the null hypothesis and therefore, there does not appear to be a design effect.

There is also a second assumption which is important to the design of list experiments, the ‘no liars’ assumption (Blair and Imai 2012). The no liars assumption relates to whether respondents answer honestly to the sensitive item even under the list experiment design. There are two situations where this is potentially problematic - ceiling and floor effects. Ceiling effects occur when respondents agree with all four statements in the treatment condition, and

Table 7.1

	est.	s.e.
$\pi(Y_i(0) = 0, Z_i = 1)$	0.00	0.00
$\pi(Y_i(0) = 1, Z_i = 1)$	0.02	0.02
$\pi(Y_i(0) = 2, Z_i = 1)$	0.10	0.01
$\pi(Y_i(0) = 3, Z_i = 1)$	0.01	0.00
$\pi(Y_i(0) = 0, Z_i = 0)$	0.00	0.00
$\pi(Y_i(0) = 1, Z_i = 0)$	0.26	0.02
$\pi(Y_i(0) = 2, Z_i = 0)$	0.57	0.02
$\pi(Y_i(0) = 3, Z_i = 0)$	0.04	0.01

P-value = 0.98

therefore it is clear they agree with the sensitive statement. In this situation, they may not respond honestly to avoid revealing this. In the floor effects situation, respondents may not agree with any of the statements so it is clear they have disagreed with the sensitive item. This is not a problem in the current design given the topic and wording of the statement. The no liars assumption cannot be tested directly, but the design took steps to alleviate concerns regarding these issues and there are also reasons to be less concerned with the implications for the results.

First, the list experiment included statements worded in such a way that respondents who agreed with one, were unlikely to agree with another. The goal of this design was to reduce the likelihood that respondents would agree with all three control statements. In this case, the two contrasting statements were ‘The minimum wage should be higher’ and ‘There should be less investment in health and education’. Although these are not perfectly opposed, there is likely to be a strong correlation between agreement and disagreement across these statements. Second, if the design effects assumption is violated it results in an *underestimation* of the level of agreement with the sensitive item. In this case, it would mean that the levels of support for political violence are even higher than those presented in the main paper. Although this is clearly an issue, it means the findings are a conservative estimate of the true levels of support for

violence.

7.2 Robustness and additional analysis

Table 7.2: Predicted support for political violence for each characteristic using combined multivariate regression model for responses to the list experiment.

Characteristic	Predicted Probability
Conflict	0.1464
No Conflict	0.0858
Age1	0.1097
Age2	0.1100
Age3	0.1102
Age4	0.1104
Age5	0.1106
Age6	0.1109
Age7	0.1111
Female	0.1466
Male	0.0961
Unionist	0.1860
Nationalist	0.2364
Neither	0.0712
Loyalist	0.5573
Not Loyalist	0.0955
Republican	0.2345
Not Republican	0.1142
British	0.1499
Not British	0.1062
Irish	0.1370
Not Irish	0.1136
Protestant	0.1129
Not Protestant	0.1256
Catholic	0.0266
Not Catholic	0.1659

7.2.1 Pre-riots analysis

As noted in chapter 2, and as will be discussed extensively in chapter 4, significant rioting broke out during the survey. The differences in responses before

and after the riots will be analysed in detail in Chapter 4, however, it is also important to understand whether any of the findings here are an artefact of the riots. In order to do this, the data was split into before and after the riots, and the analysis was rerun only for those who responded before the onset of the riots. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, there are important differences before and after. Here, we are interested in whether any of the findings discussed above are not present before the riots. Therefore all models run above are rerun on those who responded before the riots.

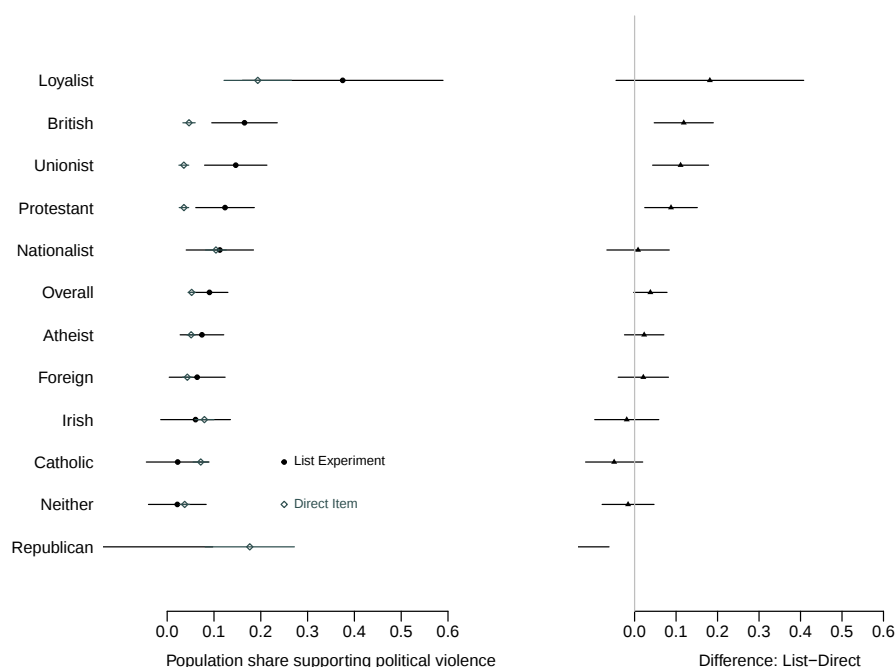


Figure 7.1: This graph displays the difference between responses to direct question versus list experiment across demographics and socialization variables. 95% confidence intervals displayed

The results for the intergroup model is presented in Figure 7.1. The results are generally the same. Identities associated with the Protestant community show significantly higher levels of support in the list experiment relative to the direct question, whilst identities associated with the Catholic community show no significant differences. The main change to note here are the mixed effects for loyalist and republican identity. As can be clearly seen the confidence

intervals here are extremely large. The challenge with these identities is that when we lose half the observations, and given these groups have a small number of identifiers it we lose significant power. For example, we only have 31 loyalist identifiers and 17 republican identifiers in the pre-riots group. As a result, the confidence intervals become extremely wide and less reliable. However, given the effects hold for all other identities in each community - unionist, Protestant, British, nationalist, Catholic, Irish - and the direct of the effects are the same for republican and loyalist identities, we can be relatively confident about the main findings.

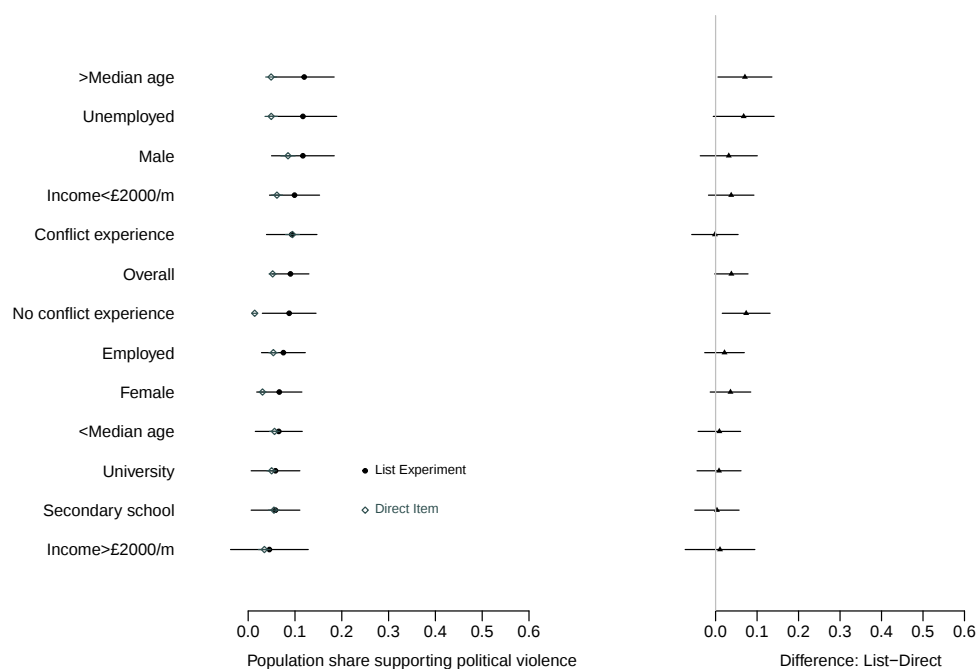


Figure 7.2: This graph displays the difference between responses to direct question versus list experiment across demographics and socialization variables. 95% confidence intervals displayed

The results for the socialization and demographics model are presented in Figure 7.2. Here the results are very similar but the effects for women just fall short of statistical significance. Again, this is likely due to losing half the observations.

7.2.2 Non-strategic measurement error

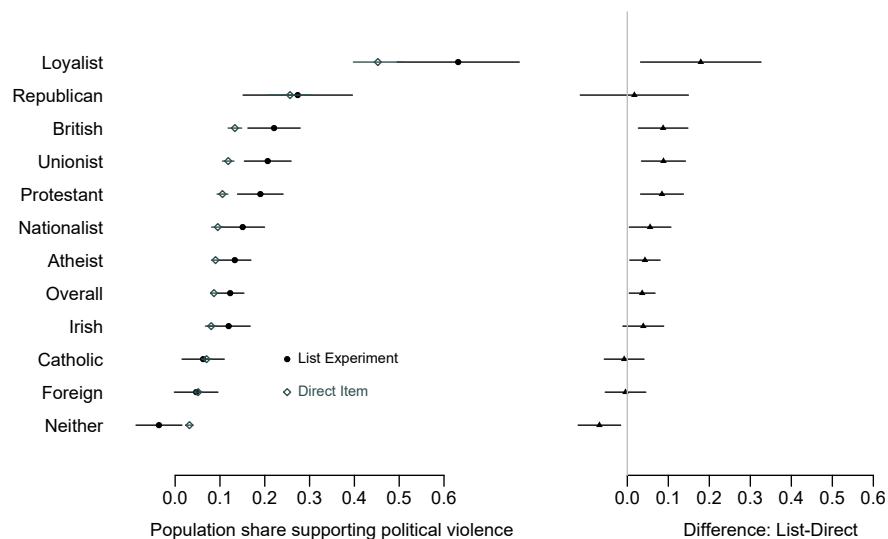


Figure 7.3: Difference in support for political violence amongst different demographic groups excluding fastest respondents

Table 7.3: Predicted support for political violence for each characteristic using combined multivariate regression model for responses to the list experiment.

	Mean (direct)	Mean (list)	Difference
All	0.09 (0.01)	0.12 (0.03)	0.03
Unionist	0.12 (0.01)	0.21 (0.05)	0.09***
Nationalist	0.10 (0.01)	0.15 (0.05)	0.05
British	0.13 (0.02)	0.22 (0.06)	0.09***
Irish	0.08 (0.01)	0.12 (0.05)	0.04
Loyalist	0.45 (0.05)	0.63 (0.13)	0.18***
Republican	0.26 (0.05)	0.27 (0.12)	0.01

8 Appendix to Chapter 4

8.1 Riots as a treatment

As discussed, the analysis presented in chapter 4 requires that the onset of the riots acts as an as-if random treatment to participants. However, one potential challenge is if the riots caused certain types of people to respond to the survey which would potentially bias the analysis. In order to check for this, balance tests were run on some important demographic variables before and after the onset of the riots. The balance tests are presented in Table 8.1 and for the most part, these show that the sample is balanced before and after. However, there is an important difference for age and gender presented below. One explanation for the gender difference is the sampling procedure, where initially we had an over-representation of women in the respondents to the survey so we sought to rebalance this which resulted in more male respondents later in the survey fielding, and therefore after the onset of the riots. This is problematic as there are differences in the way women and men respond to questions regarding violence. However, additional models were run to account for this and there is an important explanation for why it does not bias the results presented in the main analysis.

First, before moving onto the additional analysis it is important to consider the implications of gender unbalance for the analysis. The analysis presented

in the main paper is focused on differences between identity groups, not gender. Specifically, unless there is a different response based on gender *within* each community, then this imbalance should not interfere significantly with the analysis. To elaborate further, because we only see an effect amongst groups in the Protestant community, it is clear that the riots are not having an effect on those who identify with the Catholic community *irrespective of gender*. Therefore, we can infer from this that it is more likely that the effects are driven by community identification rather than gender.

Despite this, and in order to provide further evidence that the age and gender differences are not the cause of the results presented, additional models were run. These are presented in Table 8.2. We can see here that the interaction between riots and unionist identity is significant for men, women, old and young. Whereas it is not significant for nationalist identity for any of these groups.

Table 8.1: Balance test of personal characteristics before and after riots onset

Variable	Pre-Violence Mean	Post-Violence Mean	Difference
Education (Scale)	2.720 (0.748)	2.695 (0.751)	-0.025 (0.038)
University	0.558 (0.497)	0.531 (0.499)	-0.028 (0.025)
Secondary School	0.442 (0.497)	0.469 (0.499)	0.028 (0.025)
Employed	0.679 (0.467)	0.665 (0.472)	-0.014 (0.024)
Catholic	0.305 (0.461)	0.351 (0.478)	0.046 (0.024)
Protestant	0.408 (0.492)	0.434 (0.496)	0.026 (0.025)
Married	0.504 (0.5)	0.565 (0.496)	0.062 (0.025)
Age	45.297 (14.164)	49.940 (14.972)	4.643*** (0.736)
Female	0.596 (0.491)	0.336 (0.473)	-0.260*** (0.024)

Standard deviations (standard errors for the last column) are in parentheses

Table 8.2: Age and Gender Models

	DV: Support for political violence			
	<Median Age	>Median Age	Female Only	Male Only
Post-violence	0.004 (0.05)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.03 (0.05)
Post-violence*Unionist	0.17** (0.06)	0.12* (0.05)	0.16*** (0.04)	0.12* (0.06)
Post-violence*Nationalist	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.07)
Unionist	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.003 (0.04)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.05)
Nationalist	0.04 (0.04)	0.12** (0.05)	0.03 (0.02)	0.14* (0.06)
Catholic	0.02 (0.03)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.0005 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.04)
Protestant	0.01 (0.03)	0.003 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)
Age	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)
Female	-0.09*** (0.02)	-0.07*** (0.02)		
University	0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.0003 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Income	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Employed	-0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)
Constant	0.30*** (0.06)	0.25* (0.10)	0.14*** (0.03)	0.21** (0.07)
Observations	782	792	743	831
R ²	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.05
Adjusted R ²	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.04
Residual Std. Error	0.29 (df = 769)	0.27 (df = 779)	0.20 (df = 731)	0.33 (df = 819)

Table showing robustness models for age and gender. First model shows only those aged below the median age, and second model shows only those above median age. Third model shows just female respondents, whilst fourth model shows only male respondents. *(p<0.05), **(p<0.01), ***(p<0.001)

Table 8.3: Main results full model run with both OLS and logit

	DV: Support for political violence	
	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Logistic</i>
	(1)	(2)
Post-violence	0.01 (0.03)	0.11 (0.52)
Post-violence*Unionist	0.14*** (0.04)	1.71** (0.62)
Post-violence*Nationalist	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.32 (0.61)
Unionist	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.22 (0.46)
Nationalist	0.07* (0.03)	1.16** (0.41)
Age	-0.02*** (0.01)	-0.25*** (0.07)
Female	-0.08*** (0.02)	-1.18*** (0.23)
Catholic	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.14 (0.31)
Protestant	0.01 (0.02)	0.07 (0.28)
University	-0.005 (0.01)	-0.05 (0.19)
Income	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.14 (0.07)
Employed	-0.004 (0.02)	-0.08 (0.27)
Constant	0.22*** (0.04)	-1.00* (0.49)
Observations	1,574	1,574
R ²	0.07	
Adjusted R ²	0.06	
Log Likelihood		-422.35
AIC		870.69

Table showing results for full model with controls. Positive values indicate an increase in support for political violence. *(p<0.05), **(p<0.01), ***(p<0.001)

Table 8.4: Main results full model with loyalist and republican identity, using both OLS and logit

	DV: Support for political violence	
	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Logistic</i>
	(1)	(2)
Post-violence	0.03* (0.02)	0.50* (0.24)
Loyalist	0.13** (0.05)	1.40** (0.51)
Republican	0.11 (0.07)	1.20 (0.69)
Age	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.22** (0.08)
Female	-0.07*** (0.01)	-1.03*** (0.23)
Catholic	0.01 (0.02)	0.08 (0.27)
Protestant	0.01 (0.02)	0.11 (0.26)
University	0.01 (0.01)	0.13 (0.21)
Income	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.08 (0.08)
Employed	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.12 (0.28)
Post-violence*loyalist	0.38*** (0.06)	1.38* (0.60)
Post-violence*republican	0.08 (0.07)	0.09 (0.76)
Constant	0.17*** (0.03)	-1.39** (0.48)
Observations	1,570	1,570
R ²	0.16	
Adjusted R ²	0.15	
Log Likelihood		-395.69
AIC		817.37

Table showing results for full model with controls. Positive values indicate an increase in support for political violence. *(p<0.05), **(p<0.01), ***(p<0.001)

8.2 The differing effect of identity groups

As shown in Table 8.4, the effects hold for loyalist and republican identities despite the smaller sample size potentially reducing the power of the analysis. Building on the argument in chapter 2, we might expect that there are differing effects for different identity groups *within* each of the main communities in Northern Ireland. In order to explore this, the analysis is rerun including multiple interactions: republican*post-violence; nationalist*post-violence; loyalist*post-violence; and, unionist*post-violence. Given the low number of identifiers with republican and loyalist identities, and the overlap between these groups and other groups, it may be difficult to find effects in a multiple interaction model. Therefore, this analysis should be taken as exploratory only. The results are presented in Table 8.5.

Overall the results support the main theoretical framework proposed in the paper, however, there is a potentially interesting additional finding which builds on the discussion in chapter 2. Specifically, as predicted in the theory, we see no interaction effect for nationalist or republican identity with post-riots, but we do see an effect for loyalist and unionist. The main point of note here is that the interaction with unionist identity is more stable across both the linear and logit model, which suggests that the violence is having a larger effect on more moderate people, rather than those already associated with the smaller, more radical loyalist group identity. However, it is also possible that this is due to the low sample size for loyalist identifiers and therefore these results should be taken as exploratory only.

Table 8.5: Exploratory analysis with multiple identity interactions

	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Logistic</i>
	(1)	(2)
Nationalist	-0.001 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.54)
Unionist	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.46 (0.50)
Post-violence	0.06* (0.03)	1.04* (0.42)
Loyalist	0.15** (0.05)	1.90*** (0.57)
Republican	0.07 (0.07)	0.47 (0.71)
Age	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.21** (0.08)
Female	-0.07*** (0.01)	-1.03*** (0.24)
Catholic	-0.002 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.32)
Protestant	-0.002 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.31)
University	0.01 (0.01)	0.13 (0.21)
Income	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.10 (0.08)
Employed	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.13 (0.29)
Post-violence*unionist	0.09** (0.03)	1.64* (0.67)
Post-violence*nationalist	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.68 (0.64)
Post-violence*loyalist	0.32*** (0.06)	0.50 (0.67)
Post-violence*republican	0.14 (0.08)	1.23 (0.82)
Constant	0.17*** (0.04)	-1.49** (0.53)
Observations	1,570	1,570
R ²	0.17	
Adjusted R ²	0.16	
Log Likelihood		-384.17
Akaike Inf. Crit.		802.35

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