

PhD Workshop Presentation Feedback

Tom Parkin, The University of Sheffield

A Study of the Role of Religious Leaders and British State Actors in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland

Please note there were technical problems beyond the control of students, however, all of the speakers responded extremely well to this disruption – being responsive and flexible when presenting our work is a key researcher skill – well done!

What a great presentation of Tom's PhD and the work undertaken so far. The delivery and style in which Tom presented were both engaging and informative—I genuinely wanted to hear more about the research!

While the focus of Tom's PhD is on the role of religious leaders and British state actors in building sustainable peace in post-conflict Northern Ireland, it was fascinating to hear how child sexual abuse emerged organically within his interviews. I was particularly struck by the many intersections between The Troubles and the contexts in which child sexual abuse occurred within the church.

Tom's reflections on faith communities were powerful—how they can be both sites of harm and silence (in relation to both conflict and abuse) yet also places of healing and recovery. I found the dichotomy he described among clergy abuse survivors especially moving: their deep connection to faith, community, and leadership, contrasted with the profound shame they carried due to the actions of others in the institution.

Theoretical concepts such as restoration, recovery, and peace feel incredibly relevant to both conflict and trauma survival—and the parallels Tom is drawing between recovering from civil conflict and recovering from child sexual abuse are thought-provoking and important. I wasn't sure how central the child sexual abuse narratives will be in his final thesis, but if these stories remain a key theme,

incorporating feminist and sociological theories could really strengthen the analysis and help position this work within a broader scholarly context.

Finally, I'd love to hear the podcast when it's available—it sounds like a fantastic way to share this work with wider audiences.