Policing the Drumcree Demonstrations in Northern Ireland: Testing Leadership Theory In Practice

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1 How this case study came about

1.1 Practising What We Teach and Teaching What We Practice

This article is a case study of radical change in the leadership strategy for the policing of the annual Drumcree Sunday demonstrations in Northern Ireland between 2002 and 2004. It is co-authored by an academic and a practitioner who were both involved in different ways in the development and implementation of the alternative strategy. John Benington researches and teaches public leadership and public value on the Warwick MPA degree, a public sector MBA. Irwin Turbitt was at the time a chief superintendent in the Police Service of Northern Ireland, and Warwick MPA student from 2000 to 2003.

In 2001, Turbitt was given responsibility for the policing of the Drumcree Parades. These take place every July and at the time involved the Protestant unionist Orange Order marching through streets heavily populated by Catholic nationalists, leading to severe clashes. Turbitt decided a new strategy was needed to ease the hostilities and to transform the conflict, which had been extremely violent for over 20 years with the police caught in the middle.

Turbitt decided to test an approach based on Mark Moore’s ideas about public value, and Ronald Heifetz’ ideas about adaptive leadership, to which he had been introduced by Benington on the Warwick MPA. He also invited Benington to shadow him, the police and the army during the annual Drumcree Sunday demonstrations in July 2002, July 2003 and July 2004. Benington attended various parts of the preparation and debriefing for the July events, and was given free access to discussions with police and army officials. He was also able to spend time with senior figures in the Protestant Orange Order and the mainly Republican Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition, even visiting some in their homes for confidential discussions.

Turbitt and Benington shared a portacabin at the army barracks where the police were billeted for the weekend of the demonstrations. Throughout the day and late into the night, they discussed the events as they unfolded.

Turbitt wrote up his experience as a case study of adaptive leadership for his Warwick MPA. He was later promoted to assistant chief constable and seconded to the role of deputy director of the Home Office Police Standards Unit. He has now retired from the police and has become an associate fellow at Warwick Business School, teaching MPA students sitting in the same classroom he sat in when he himself was a student.

This leadership case study draws on Turbitt’s first-hand experience as police silver commander for the whole operation, his critical reflection upon theory in the light of this practice, and his
subsequent teaching. It combines this with Benington’s participant observation and field notes taken at Drumcree each July over three years.

This gives the case study both strengths and weaknesses. First, one of the key actors in the case study, Irwin Turbitt, is contributing to the account and to the discussion from first hand experience, which adds greatly to its texture and immediacy. But inevitably this privileges his particular perspective on events and overshadows alternative perspectives. We have tried to balance this by including other voices, both from the literature and from interviews.

Second, the case study is ongoing rather than complete. The Drumcree demonstrations continue each July, and new developments take place every year. This contrasts with many other leadership case studies based upon past events and dead leaders.

Third, Turbitt is consciously applying, testing, and adapting particular academic theories. This provides an unusually clear and compelling interpretation of the case, but may inhibit readers from making their own original interpretation. It will be important for readers to pay close attention to the complexities and the paradoxes of the leadership challenge, and of the decision-making situation, rather than generalizing too quickly from theory.

Fourth, Benington is by no means an independent or neutral commentator. He leads the Warwick MPA module on leadership, strategy and value, and draws heavily on the work of Heifetz and Moore, both of whom are personal friends as well as academic colleagues. Benington was also one of the supervisors for Turbitt’s MPA dissertation on Drumcree.

It is for the reader to decide whether these ‘insider’ views and committed perspectives help or hinder your own analysis and learning from the case.

1.2 Irwin Turbitt’s Story

In 2000 I was the head of the Performance Development Unit at National Police Training. While in this post I began the Warwick MPA course. I had long been interested in leadership theory and practice and had been drawn to the course as a result of a conversation with John Benington at an open day at Warwick University in May 2000. I was pleased to find an academic interested in strengthening the relationship between theory and practice. We agreed that the purpose of theory was to improve practice, and that improved practice should help develop better theory.

In December 2001 I was appointed commander of the Craigavon District Command Unit (DCU) outside Belfast. Craigavon is one of the busiest DCUs in Northern Ireland. It was designed as a new town in the late 1960s to subsume the two existing towns of Lurgan and Portadown. It is an interesting area to police, with a range of difficult challenges such as drugs, race crime, burglary and alcohol-related crime, as well as specific Northern Ireland issues such as paramilitary activity and, of course, the ‘Drumcree’ demonstrations which take place each July between Protestant unionists and Catholic republicans. However, this would not be my first experience policing Drumcree – I worked there over a number of July weekends since 1986.

Following my return to Northern Ireland, I spent the first three months in North Belfast working on the ‘Holy Cross’ school dispute. During this dispute the police mounted a large-scale operation to
protect Catholic school children walking along a 285 metre stretch of road – considered Protestant – and through a protest mounted by the residents of that area. Like most disputes in Northern Ireland it had its roots in a long-contested history of bitter sectarianism. Like most such disputes, there was little or no civilized contact between the two sides and the police found themselves in the middle.

After nine weeks there was a half-term break and I reviewed our operation from first principles. We devised a four-stage plan for what we called ‘enforced normality’ and I explained this to both sides on the weekend before school recommenced. Essentially, we accepted that neither side was going to behave reasonably, so we would use state force to keep the peace. Somewhat to my surprise within a week the two sides were in face- to-face talks, and the protest ended within three weeks.

However, as a police officer I was troubled by our lack of success in prosecuting anyone for the serious offences committed as part of the Holy Cross dispute. I had been a front line officer in such situations for 15 years and knew that it was almost impossible to collect evidence while being attacked by crowds throwing stones, paint and petrol bombs, and potentially shooting bullets.

This was on my mind when I got the chance, in early 2002, to think of a new approach to the policing of ‘Drumcree’. The previous year, at another difficult Orange Order parade in Portadown, 68 police officers had been injured and it was made clear to me by my new assistant chief constable boss that a repeat would not be acceptable. It was also clear to the force that the previous approach had not been successful. A change was not only expected but hoped for, and this gave me the chance to try something new.

I was studying for my MPA at this time, and it struck me that the requirement to complete a research project provided an opportunity to test Heifetz’s theory of adaptive leadership in the real world. I could use it to steer my planning and commanding of the policing operation for ‘Drumcree Sunday’ in 2002 and 2003. In doing so, I could reflect on my experience in a manner that practitioners seldom have an opportunity to do.

So what is adaptive leadership? It emerged in discussions between public managers at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and is based on real world cases. In a Fast Company article based on an interview with Ron Heifetz, William Taylor says adaptive leadership requires:

- a stomach for conflict and uncertainty – among their people and within themselves. This requires an experimental mind-set and an acceptance that some decisions will work and some won’t. It means that some projects will pay off, some won’t. But every decision and every project will provide opportunities to learn something about how the world is changing – and about how your organisation compares with its competition.

I was doing the Warwick MPA because I believed in the usefulness of practitioners learning theory and applying it in practice. And I was a public servant because I wanted to create public value. I knew that policing in Craigavon was full of conflict and uncertainty, and I believed Heifetz’s theory offered the chance to create real public value in a very difficult situation. Here was an opportunity to test those beliefs. If the theory had value then it should be possible to apply it and see results.

‘Drumcree’ is far from being resolved. But adaptive leadership theory claims ‘to evaluate leadership in process, rather than wait until the outcome is clear’, as Heifetz puts it. This means that it should be possible to draw useful conclusions from a situation that is still very much a live problem, and also to complete the whole cycle of theory building, theory testing, theory validation, and
development.

1.3 The Drumcree Conflict

1.3.1 Context

The Drumcree conflict is part of a wider history of deep-seated sectarian conflicts within Ireland between unionists and republicans, Protestants and Catholics. Some historians believe the crucial divisions date from the Reformation in the 16th century and the plantation and religious wars of the 17th century. The conflict which surfaces at Drumcree thus has very deep roots in history and culture, as well as in politics and religion. These divisions are experienced in the here and now of Northern Ireland as split communities, segregated schools, and sectarian biases within many workplaces in both the public and private sectors.

This case study covers 2002-2004, a period overshadowed by the signing of the historic Good Friday peace agreement in 1998. That agreement was based upon a power-sharing arrangement which gave representatives of each community a veto over the other in a devolved assembly. The British secretary of state was to remain responsible for non-devolved matters – significantly, law and order – and to represent Northern Ireland in the UK.

The peace agreement was signed in April 1998, and endorsed by the public in a referendum in May 1998. But only very limited progress had been made beyond this point. Republicans were determined not to be seen as the defeated army, so they refused to decommission their weapons unilaterally. Unionists were unhappy with plans for the early release of political prisoners. They also disliked plans for the termination of the largely Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and its non-sectarian re-branding as the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Elections to the new Northern Ireland Assembly were held in June 1998. But establishment of the Northern Ireland Executive was delayed by arguments over whether the Irish Republican Army should be required to decommission its weapons before its political wing, Sinn Fein, was allowed to take seats on the Executive. Power was eventually devolved to the assembly in November 1999 on the understanding that decommissioning would begin once the assembly was fully functional. However, by February 2000, the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Mandelson, had suspended the assembly on the grounds that insufficient decommissioning had taken place. The assembly was restored in May 2000 when the IRA pledged to put its weapons ‘beyond use’ and to open some of its weapons dumps to inspection by international monitors. In November 2000, the first minister of the assembly, David Trimble, banned Sinn Fein ministers from participation in the north-south bodies in order to force progress on IRA decommissioning. However, failure to achieve that progress led to his resignation in July 2001.

In the UK general election shortly afterwards, the Northern Ireland parties polarized even further. Parliamentary seats were gained by the Democratic Unionist Party led by Ian Paisley at the expense of David Trimble’s more moderate Ulster Unionist Party. Seats were also gained by Gerry Adam’s Sinn Fein at the expense of John Hume’s more moderate Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). According to some commentators, by the summer of 2001 the gulf between the two communities was deeper and wider than for 30 years.
1.3.2 Drumcree 1807-1986

The ‘Drumcree Sunday’ parade was associated with incidents of disorder, terrorism and even murder long before the most recent troubles. The events that lie at the heart of this situation are from one perspective rather simple. A group of citizens, Orangemen from Loyal Orange Lodge (LOL) No 1, march from their meeting hall in Portadown to Drumcree Parish Church, usually on the first Sunday in July each year, for a religious service. This service commemorates those who lost their lives in the First World War battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916. Afterwards, the Orangemen march back to their starting point in Portadown. Their preferred return route includes the Garvaghy Road where another group of citizens – the nationalist residents represented by the Garvaghy Road Residents Committee (GRRC) – reside.

But this annual march, which has been taking place since 1807, has a history that confounds the simple factual description above. Portadown has great importance as the town closest to where the Orange Order was formed in 1795, and Portadown District was the first district in the Orange Order. ‘Drumcree’ is often seen as a marching problem but marching is simply the visible symptom of a much more fundamental issue. As Seamus Mallon, the SDLP deputy leader, said in 1996: “The marches have not to do with who marched that road, but whose writ runs in Northern Ireland.”

The Orange Order
People often ask if the Orange Order is a religious or a political organization. Arnold Hatch, Mayor of Craigavon, was quoted in the Portadown Times in 1985 as saying: ‘The Orange Order is a Christian non-political organisation’. This seems to be confirmed by the membership criteria as quoted by Susan McKay:

- an Orangeman should ‘cultivate truth and justice . . . obedience to the laws; his deportment must be gentle and compassionate . . . he should honour and diligently study the holy scriptures . . . abstain from all cursing and profane language’. He should, above all, be a Protestant ‘never in any way connected with the Church of Rome’ whose ‘fatal errors’ he should ‘strenuously oppose’, while ‘abstaining from all uncharitable words, actions or sentiments’ towards Catholics.

Historically, there has been a close link between Drumcree and Portadown and the wider political scene in Northern Ireland. The Orange Order was pivotally involved in the campaign that persuaded the British government to partition Ireland in 1922 and to create a Northern Ireland remaining within the United Kingdom, while the rest of Ireland gained independence as a Republic.

The first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland was James Craig, a leading Orangeman, and later honoured as Lord Craigavon of Stormont. In 1932 he said ‘I am an Orangeman first and a politician and member of this parliament afterwards’.

The march to Drumcree Church was a flashpoint as far back as 1873. The route included Obins Street, which was accessed through nationalist area The Tunnel, and it is reported that 100 Police with fixed bayonets confronted an Orange mob at The Tunnel, injuring several people and killing one.

In 1905 Catholic Patrick Falloon was watching an Orange Parade pass through Obins Street when he was confronted by Protestant Thomas Cordoner, who produced a revolver and shot him dead. Prolonged conflict then began between the police and several hundred Orangemen. That evening, the police blocked the mouth of Obins Street to prevent another Orange Parade going through The
Tunnel area.

Fast forward to 1972. Hundreds of members of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), clad in masks and paramilitary uniforms, escorted the Orangemen through The Tunnel into Obins Street to ensure their march was not impeded. Then in 1975 bombs were planted in derelict houses in Obins Street and set to detonate whilst the parade was passing. Following a warning, security forces searched the entire route and defused the bombs, thus enabling the parade to proceed.

Successive chief constables from as early as 1970 highlighted the costs of policing parades. Chief constable Sir Graham Shillington wrote in his 1970 annual report:

> Many of these events carried enormous danger potentially in a city where experience has shown that even minor incidents can generate widespread and vicious rioting. While parades do not represent the sole danger to peace and order, it would nevertheless be a single contribution if the organisers of such efforts, wherever they may be, were to co-operate more fully with the Police in a selection of routes which avoided flashpoints as far as possible.

In his 1975 annual report, Sir Kenneth Newman, who had come from Scotland Yard to help rebuild and reorganise the RUC after the trauma of 1969 and the start of The Troubles, wrote:

> No serious incident took place but the fact that some 14,860 Police Officers had to be transported to events throughout the Province gave some indication of the heavy demands made on the overstretched resources of the Force.

Jack Hermon, a local officer who replaced Newman, wrote in his first Annual Report, in 1980:

> It is worth mentioning that all too often large numbers of Police personnel have to be deployed to deal with politically inspired parades and demonstrations, many of which pose a serious threat to public order. It is unfortunate after the experience of more than a decade of violence and civil disturbance, that such activities have not been abandoned in favour of less inflammatory forms of political expression.

Some five years later, having tried all other means, Hermon decided it was time to make more use of the state force available to him to regulate parades. He chose Portadown as one of four locations on which to focus. On Sunday 6 July, the RUC announced that the Church Parade would be allowed through The Tunnel the next day, but that parades on 12 and 13 July would not. Some Orangemen wanted to accept the change and go on with their celebrations. Others wanted to ‘converge’ in Portadown as a protest. A minority of hotheads wanted to storm the police barricades and march through. Serious rioting ensued and tensions between loyalists and the RUC in Portadown ran very high for a number of years. Dozens of RUC officers were intimidated or burnt out of their homes and many loyalists felt betrayed by ‘their’ police force.

There was much discussion between the Portadown District, unionist politicians and the RUC over the following months. An agreement was eventually reached, but it was the first of many negotiated in haste in times of great stress, and afterwards understood very differently by each the parties involved. In this case the Orangemen believed they had agreed to give up marching along Obins Street in exchange for a permanent guarantee they could march along the Garvaghy Road. The police claim there was no such commitment. There is no written record of the agreement.

1.3.3 Drumcree 1986-2001
Since 1986, the parade has marched to Drumcree Parish Church via Corcrain Road, Charles Street and Dungannon Road, although LOL No 1 continues to this day to include Obins Street in its notified route. For some years, the return route included Garvaghy Road. Although some Garvaghy Road residents opposed the parade, and large numbers of police and soldiers were required, the number of incidents was minimal until 1995.

Orangemen claimed that opposition to the parades down the Garvaghy Road had been whipped up by the IRA. However, it was SDLP leader John Hume who in 1986 objected to diverting the parades from Obins Street and the Tunnel while still permitting them to march down the Garvaghy Road since it, too, was predominantly Catholic. He claimed that the authorities were giving in to Orange bullying.

In 1995, after continuous campaigning by Garvaghy Road residents and surrounding nationalists, the RUC rerouted the March away from Garvaghy Road – the first time in 188 years. More than 1000 police officers were sent to Drumcree in an attempt to ward off any trouble. The situation changed dramatically and the current series of ‘Drumcree Sunday’ parades and associated policing operations began.

The Orangemen were thrown into immediate disarray. Orange Order members and others rioted, attempting to break through the police barricades. The police fired 24 plastic bullets. Meanwhile, thousands more loyalists continued to arrive in Portadown, and the Orange Order leaders and senior police officers began talks in an attempt to resolve the crisis.

A verbal agreement was reached that the Parade could proceed along the Garvaghy Road but without any bands. Nationalist protester had been sitting on the road, but now they moved quietly aside and watched around 500 Orangemen walk silently past, led by Unionist MPs David Trimble and Ian Paisley. When the parade reached the centre of Portadown, Paisley and Trimble raised their arms up in the air in what appeared to be a gesture of triumph. This led to ill-feeling among the residents of the Garvaghy Road who believed that both the RUC and the Orange Order had broken their word.

This new volatile phase began as the peace process was moving towards the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. Residents groups in nationalist areas were becoming more prominent, and the number one item on their agenda was parades. Parades were also top of the unionist political agenda. The Orange Order portrayed the issue as a false one, stirred up by Sinn Fein to attack Protestant culture. This ignores the long history associated with parades in Portadown, but there is no doubt that Sinn Fein used the issue to great effect politically. The high profile of the issue was recognised by ministers and officials at Stormont Castle and by the RUC.

On ‘Drumcree Sunday’ 1996, RUC chief constable Hugh Annesley decided to prevent the return parade from using the Garvaghy Road, and it was again stopped at Drumcree Bridge just down the hill from the church. A standoff commenced immediately. There was a steady increase in violence throughout Northern Ireland, with major routes being blocked by Orangemen and loyalist supporters. At Drumcree, demonstrators attempted to break through the barbed wire barricades erected by the police and army, and threw stones and bottles. The police reacted, firing plastic bullets which injured three loyalist supporters.
Over the next four days the conflict escalated. Michael McGoldrick, a Catholic taxi driver in Lurgan was murdered, over 100 incidents of intimidation took place, there were 758 attacks on the police, 50 RUC officer were injured, and the police fired 662 plastic baton rounds.

The public order situation was getting worse. Northern Ireland was fast approaching anarchy and with 12 July 1996 looming, the Orange Order threatened to bring 100,000 Orangemen to Drumcree. On the morning of 11 July, the Chief Constable reversed his original decision to re-route the parade. Approximately 1200 Portadown Orangemen were allowed to march down the Garvaghy Road. The RUC moved quickly onto Garvaghy Road, supported by large numbers of the military, and cleared the nationalist residents from the road, pushing them back into the estates on either side to allow the Orange Order parade to pass. Rioting erupted immediately in the road, and nationalist areas in north and west Belfast, Derry and Armagh. The decision sparked off major discussions about who governs Northern Ireland, the role of policing and the impartiality of the police force. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Ireland, Cardinal Daly said:

I don’t think there is any way in which the decision could have been favourably received but the way in which it was executed made it still more unfavourably received. It had a devastating effect on the relationship between the RUC and the Catholic community. I have no doubt about that.

The mishandling of Drumcree in 1996 left a terrible legacy. It exacerbated the long-standing problem of policing a divided society without full consent and co-operation, and, at a single stroke, destroyed 25 years of painful but tangible progress in transforming the relationship between the RUC and the Catholic minority community. It cost over £40 million. The RUC appeared either unprepared, or unable, to stand up to intimidation from the Orange Order.

Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland secretary of state, set up an independent review of parades and marches in Northern Ireland. The review recommended the creation of a Parades Commission which would take over decision-making from the police. The police made decisions on a single narrow criterion, the public order impact. However, the Parades Commission would consider other factors such as community impact.

The Parades Commission was not fully functional in time for the 1997 marching season, and as ‘Drumcree Sunday’ approached there was no accommodation between LOL No 1 and the GRRC. Shortly before the march, the Loyalist Volunteer Force issued a death threat against Catholics if the parade was not allowed to proceed.

On Sunday 6th July 1997 at 3.55am, without prior warning, 1500 RUC officers and supporting British soldiers moved onto the Garvaghy Road and sealed off the area. Rioting broke out and plastic bullets were fired. At around 1.15pm, the Orange Order parade was allowed to proceed down the Garvaghy Road. Later that day, the RUC Chief Constable, Ronnie Flanagan, said he had decided to allow the parade to pass down the Garvaghy Road because of the threats to Catholics from loyalist paramilitaries. Rioting spread during the rest of the day to other nationalist areas.

In June 1998, the Parades Commission issued its first determination on ‘Drumcree Sunday’. It stated the parade would be re-routed so that it would not pass down the Garvaghy Road. An attempt was made with the wording to be optimistic and positive:

We would also want to stress that our decision relates to 1998 alone. There are many elements of the Drumcree Church Parade which are not at odds with most of the factors in our guidelines. For
example, it is a Church Parade, it has been demonstrated that it can take place in an orderly fashion, and the Garvaghy Road is an arterial route. However, we see the need to break the cycle in 1998. The opportunity to provide it by such a break should be seized by political, community and religious leaders to demonstrate greater responsibility and to make strident efforts to bridge the cesium between both sides of the community so laying the foundations for a more tolerant atmosphere in future.

At Sunday lunchtime, the stand-off commenced. Prominent national figures arrived later, including the grand master of the Orange Order and Ian Paisley. Overnight, there was rioting in a number of Protestant areas of Northern Ireland and people who sympathized with the Drumcree Orangemen blocked a number of roads across the province. As the week progressed, the situation deteriorated. LOL No 1 leader Harold Gracey appealed for unity amongst Protestants: ‘We are all one family. The only way we’ll win is by standing together.’ He assured the brethren that he knew for a fact it was not the Portadown police who had decided there should be no one at the barrier to take a letter from the Order. The implication was that Portadown police were loyal - outsiders were to blame.

It was expected that the crisis would intensify over the 12 July weekend. Violence continued at Drumcree each night. At roughly 4.30am on the morning of Sunday 12 July 1998 three Catholic boys aged 8, 9 and 10-years old - Jason, Mark and Richard Quinn - were burned to death when their home was fire-bombed by loyalists.

Although spokesmen for the Orange Order argued there was no connection between this incident and Drumcree, or indeed all the other acts of violence, many supporters left in confusion and shame, and the numbers of protesters decreased considerably.

Nonetheless, during the 1998 parade and demonstration over 2,500 public order incidents were recorded. One hundred and forty four houses were damaged in attacks, 467 vehicles were damaged, 615 attacks were made on members of the security forces, including 24 shooting incidents and 45 blast bombs, 76 police offices were injured, 284 people arrested, 632 petrol bombs thrown, 2250 petrol bombs recovered by the RUC, and 837 plastic baton rounds fired by the RUC.

July 1998 was the first time the parade was prevented from marching down the Garvaghy Road. Afterwards, there were scores of marches and parades in Portadown and elsewhere in Northern Ireland in support of LOL No 1’s position. A token demonstration was maintained by the Orange Order at Drumcree from July 1998 to July 1999. The Orange Order also organized hundreds of demonstrations and marches in Portadown and across Northern Ireland in support of its demand to be allowed to parade down the Garvaghy Road. Between 1998 and 2001 a number of high-powered mediation efforts were made, to no avail. Most continued up until the last possible minute before each year’s parade.

In 2002 the determination from the Parades Commission for ‘Drumcree Sunday’ again prohibited the return parade from the Garvaghy Road. The scene was set for another ‘Drumcree Sunday’. But this year there were significant differences in the strategy adopted by the police and the army. The analysis of these differences, and the events of 2002 and 2003, are the subject of this case study.
2 Applying Theory to Practice – Drumcree 2002-3

The story of Drumcree up until 2001 illustrates the complexity and long-standing nature of the conflict, as well as the difficulty of policing it. It also illustrates the extent to which local conflicts are caught up in wider national and international questions about ‘the troubles’ in Northern Ireland. The volatility in the political, economic and social context of Drumcree did not diminish in 2002 and 2003. However, a new ingredient was introduced - a significant change in policing strategy, strongly informed by Chief Superintendent Irwin Turbitt’s appointment as silver commander and his interest in theories of public value and of adaptive leadership.

Mark Moore’s seminal book Creating Public Value aims to develop an equivalent to private value in the commercial sector, for use by public policymakers and managers. Moore suggests that strategic managers need to address three questions, known as the strategic triangle:

- what precisely is the value that we plan to add to the public realm in this situation, and how will we recognise those public value outcomes?
- how do we generate the necessary authorization and negotiate a coalition of sufficient support among both internal and external stakeholders, to achieve these public value outcomes?
- what operational capability, for example finance, technology, people, skills, is necessary to achieve these public value outcomes, and where, how and when does it need to be deployed?

Heifetz’s theory of adaptive leadership, set out in his 1994 book Leadership Without Easy Answers, distinguishes between:

- technical problems - where there is a general agreement about the diagnosis of the problem, and about the nature of the action required to solve it
- adaptive problems - where there is uncertainty, confusion or disagreement about the nature of the problem, and about the action required to tackle it.

He argues that adaptive problems require a different kind of leadership from technical problems. Adaptive leaders reject the pressure from followers to provide magical solutions to complex problems. Instead, they work with stakeholders to take responsibility for these problems and for the necessary changes in one’s own thinking and behaviour.

Heifetz sets out seven principles of adaptive leadership:

1. Identify the adaptive challenge – the changes in thinking and behaviour, including one’s own, required to grapple with difficult issues.
2. Give the work back to the people facing the problem – avoid the temptation to solve people’s problems for them. Instead, engage them in the adaptive work and in taking responsibility for the change process.
3. Regulate the distress necessary for adaptive work – create and maintain sufficient heat to keep things cooking, but not so much heat that everything boils over. Use conflict constructively.
4. Create a ‘holding environment’ in which the painful adaptive work can be done effectively - this can be a physical and/or a psychological space, providing both safety and also stretch and challenge.
5. Maintain disciplined attention – recognize the seductions of work avoidance and other displacement activity such as dependency, projection, and fight or flight. Relentlessly bring the focus back to the primary task.
6. Protect voices from below or outside – ensure that all perspectives and interests are considered, that minority viewpoints are taken into account, and that dominant views are questioned and challenged.

7. Move continuously between the balcony and the battlefield – combine a helicopter overview of the whole situation and strategy, with an understanding of the changing situation at the front-line.

Turbitt consciously used these two frameworks of public value and adaptive leadership to analyse and lead the changes in policy and practice required in the policing of the Drumcree Sunday parades in 2002 and 2003. The rest of this case study is therefore organised around this framework.

2.1 Identifying the Adaptive Challenge

Turbitt identified the adaptive challenge as the restoration of public order and adherence to the law, rather than just containing demonstrators and preventing them parading down the Garvaghy Road. The adaptive challenge he presented to the Orange Order in 2002 was thus how to carry out their parade within the framework of the law. This meant leaders taking responsibility for those within their midst who acted unlawfully.

2.1.1 The public value strategic triangle

In thinking out the adaptive leadership challenge, Turbitt also made use of the public value strategic triangle.

The first part of the triangle is the public value outcome to be achieved. The input side of the Drumcree equation is pretty clear. Each July, in preparation for ‘Drumcree Sunday’, the police and British army mount a huge operation in the Portadown area. This involves around 1300 Orangemen on the parade, 1000 police and 2000 army personnel, plus large quantities of military hardware – armoured personnel carriers, crowd control obstacles (CCOs), barricades, barbed wire installations, water cannons and so on. The cost of policing this event, with army back-up, is estimated at around £1 million every year. The output side of the Drumcree equation is also fairly clear and visible, in terms of damage to property, people and reputation. For example, in 1998, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland estimated that the financial cost of Drumcree was £40 million.

However, it was less clear what outcomes the police had been trying to achieve, apart from trying to contain violence between the various factions. Turbitt concluded that the police had been unable to focus on the outcome they really wanted, the restoration of law and order, for two reasons. First, they had become trapped in the role of referee and second, they had been unable to make arrests. The Association of Chief Police Officer’s Public Order Manual lists three main tactics police can use in public order conflicts - containment, dispersal and arrest. Turbitt believed the understandable preoccupation of the police with containment and dispersal had prevented them from being able to use the tactic of arrest.

The second element of the strategic triangle is the authorizing environment necessary to achieve these public value goals. Turbitt started thinking about how to create an authorizing environment which would allow the police to escape from the role of referee, and to positively promote public order by arresting those who broke the law. First, he had to achieve a mandate for the new strategy from his assistant chief constable and gold commander. He got this, if only because there was
widespread feeling that the level of injury sustained by the police the previous year could not be tolerated. However, this was not sufficient by itself to create a robust authorising environment among both internal and external stakeholders.

Internally, Turbitt organized a series of discussions with his police and army colleagues in early 2002 about what they were trying to achieve and how. He went further in 2003, after it had became clear from the 2002 debrief that the police and military commanders needed to do more joint preparation. He organized a high level workshop on public value for all the police and army commanders who would be involved in the Drumcree operation. He invited Professor Mark Moore himself to lead this workshop, using the classic Harvard case study method to promote active engagement in the new thinking. The cases used by Moore deliberately had nothing to do with policing, conflict, or Northern Ireland, and were designed to shift people out of their familiar thought patterns. It was fascinating to see that no one was willing to join in this case discussion until the army brigadier had first done so, thereby legitimating innovative thinking about public value outcomes. This workshop helped to provide a new framework of concepts and language within which Turbitt could discuss and develop the new strategy for Drumcree with both his police and army colleagues.

Turbitt developed the authorising environment with external stakeholders by opening up discussions to a wide range of groups. These included politicians of all parties, religious leaders of all persuasions, paramilitary groups from both loyalist and republican sections, neighbourhood community organizations, and a plethora of other agencies and individuals with a stake of some kind in the Drumcree situation. Turbitt told them of the proposed change of emphasis, away from containment and towards the promotion of public order. He argued that this shifted responsibility on to the protagonists to demonstrate within the framework of the law. He informed stakeholders that police would aim to arrest and press criminal charges against anyone found breaking the law. It was difficult for anyone to argue against this strategy and in favour of law-breaking, so formal authorization was achieved from all the main stakeholders.

We will see later that this authorizing coalition came under great strain when evidence of violent law breaking was found against several respectable churchgoers, who were not at all happy to be arrested on criminal charges.

The third element of the strategic triangle is operational capability. In previous years, the police and army had prevented the Orangemen from parading down the Garvaghy Road by installing very large and heavy CCOs - a 30 ton barrier, built around a shipping container filled with concrete, for example. This blocked off the Drumcree bridge which provided access to the Garvaghy Road. They had also ploughed the surrounding fields, dug deep ditches and installed long high stretches of barbed wire to prevent the demonstrators from surging across the fields adjoining the bridge.

But how effective were the CCOs in achieving the public value outcomes desired - the restoration and maintenance of public order? Turbitt concluded that this kind of battlefield environment reinforced the symbolism of violent conflict, and removed responsibility from the demonstrators to act within the law and police their own behaviour. The large installations also frustrated the police from achieving their desired public value outcome – they assisted containment of the crowd, but made arrest, and the restoration of the law and public order, harder. It is tough to get clear evidence of law breaking, let alone to go out and arrest people, if you are separated by a 10 foot
barricade and a wall of barbed wire!

Turbitt therefore decided to reduce the height and weight of the CCOs. A much lower and lighter mini-CCO was installed – 7 foot high and 3 tones instead of 10 foot high and 30 tons. The mini-CCO was painted with yellow stripes and looked more like a civilian traffic control installation than military hardware. Turbitt also decided to re-design the shape of the razor-wire installations to better support the new strategy. The razor-wire coils had previously been stretched out in long straight lines alongside a deep ditch. This conjured up images of First World War trenches, and of embattled, dug-in conflict. It also made arrest more difficult. Turbitt therefore asked army engineers to redesign the razor-wire into a kind of lobster pot funnel, to assist arrest of any who decided to venture across the ploughed fields and deepened ditch.

The detailed logistics for implementing the new strategy were rehearsed in the weeks leading up to Drumcree Sunday. On Monday of that week, the Parades Commission made its determination - no parade down Garvaghy Road. On Wednesday, the operational orders and the scenarios were formally signed off, with detailed documentation in case of subsequent public enquiry.

On Thursday, gold, and silver commanders briefed over 100 police and military commanders and specialist staff for 90 minutes. This was followed by a separate briefing for bronze commanders and tactical support group commanders about the use of the plastic baton gun. This is the highest level of force likely to be used by the police in riot conditions, and only under specific authorization by the silver commander. In previous years there had been ambiguity about the use of the baton gun, and some of the frontline police felt they had sustained injury as a result of this confusion. By reducing the size of the CCOs in order to hand responsibility back to the marchers, Turbitt was potentially leaving police more exposed. Careful prior clarification about the law and policy for the use of the baton gun was clearly an essential part of his leadership role.

### 2.2 Giving the Work Back to the People with the Problem

The second principle of adaptive leadership is giving the work back to the people with the problem. The police had been under pressure from many different factions within the population - Protestant and Catholic, unionist and republican, politicians and community organizations - to solve or at least to contain the problems of Drumcree. As early as 1996, RUC chief constable Sir Hugh Annesley had said the police ‘were sick to the back teeth of being the meat in the sandwich between two intransigent communities’.

In the weeks and months before Drumcree Sunday, Turbitt established community consultative groups with four key stakeholders groups - unionist politicians, nationalist politicians, LOL No1 and the GRRC. Regular meetings took place with all four, both in the run-up to Drumcree Sunday, and throughout the ten days of the operation. Turbitt attended all these meetings with the police chief inspector in charge of Drumcree planning.

In these meetings he argued that responsibility for demonstrating within the law had to be shouldered by the groups concerned. The police’s responsibility was to ensure that public order was upheld, and that anyone breaking the law would be arrested charged and prosecuted in the criminal courts. This was understood and agreed by all stakeholders, but proved to require painful adaptation in thinking and behaviour, both by the police and by the Orange Order, as we will see.
**2.2.1 Drumcree Sunday 2002**

On Sunday morning, 6 July 2002, about 1200 Orangemen and women set off from Portadown town centre to the sound of drum and pipe music. The outward parade led up Corcrain Road, Charles Street and Dungannon Road, to the Church of Ireland Drumcree Parish Church. Only about 100 nationalists – far fewer than previous years – watched the parade as it passed St John’s Catholic Church at the top of Garvaghy Rd. They stood in silence behind toughened Perspex screens erected by the police to keep the two sides apart.

The religious service in Drumcree Church by Reverend Pickering was broadcast to those standing outside who could not get into the church building. Afterwards, the Orangemen reassembled and marched three abreast to the barrier at Drumcree Bridge, while the band played the hymn ‘Abide With Me’. In keeping with the new strategy of shifting responsibility to the demonstrators, this barrier was much smaller and lighter than previous years – 7 foot high, made of corrugated iron, with locked gates at the front.

At the barrier, the deputy district grandmaster of the Portadown Orange Lodge, David Burrows addressed a crowd waving Union flags and furled umbrellas. He said that the nationalist’s refusal to let marchers go down Garvaghy Road lacked Christian charity. He claimed they were behaving like paranoid fascists, in the grip of the same mentality that led Nazis to imprison Polish Jews. Burrows handed a letter of protest to assistant chief constable Stephen White, who had opened the barrier and come forward to receive it. White commended the dignity of the parade, but when he refused to let it pass through to march down Garvaghy Road some of the loyalist supporters shouted ‘coward’ and ‘scumbag’, and spat on him.

Formal proceedings ended with the singing of the British national anthem, and within minutes a protester had climbed on top of the smaller, lighter tin barrier. He taunted the police on the other side, while another protester set light to an Irish tricolour flag. The crowd charged the barrier, hurling rocks and stones at the police, and then others grabbed hold of the construction and tried to push and bend it to the ground. Eventually they broke through, to confront a solid row of police in full black riot gear, with shields.

There were then several minutes of sustained assault, with a crowd of Orange supporters throwing rocks, bottles, branches and other missiles at the police, and the police responding by striking offenders with their truncheons. Three plastic bullets were fired, which brought at least one offender to the ground with an injured arm.

The assistant chief constable, as gold commander, ordered a maxi-CCO to be brought in by army lorry to replace the smashed mini-CCO. Transporting this huge object, made of two shipping containers filled with concrete, was complex and took longer than expected. A lorry driver on an earlier shift had rehearsed it, but the current driver had not because violence had never before erupted at this time. For similar unfortunate reasons, the water cannon vehicle was still in transit and had not yet arrived at Drumcree Bridge.

This meant police were dangerously exposed for about half an hour to direct violence from the crowd without any protection from CCO or water cannon. They were forced into more or less hand-
to-hand combat, protected only by their riot gear and shields. Eventually, the maxi-CCO was installed on the bridge, and the water cannon came into use. But 31 police officers were injured, five seriously enough to require hospital treatment. One needed reconstructive surgery to his mouth and lip.

2.3 Regulating the Distress Necessary for Adaptive Work

At this stage of the operation, the new strategy appeared a painful failure. It had been unable to shift responsibility back to the people with the problem. The Orange Order had failed to contain their followers and ensure they demonstrated within the framework of the law. Using a smaller CCO had not led to less hostility but to more. Some of the operational detail had gone wrong, namely the length of time to get the maxi-CCO in place on the bridge after the smashing of the mini-CCO, and the delay in the arrival of the water cannon. And 31 police officers had been injured as a direct consequence of the new strategy. If the maxi-CCO had been in place from the beginning as usual, it is likely those officers would have escaped the violence.

Turbitt was visibly distressed by the way the day turned out. At the height of the violence on Drumcree Bridge, he, Benington, and many of the senior police and army officers and security and intelligence staff were at headquarters about two miles away from Drumcree Bridge. They were monitoring the whole battle scene via a bank of CCTV screens, fed by cameras placed at along the route and mounted on army helicopters flying overhead. This gave an outstanding strategic overview of the whole battlefield, but Turbitt was not close enough to the front-line to follow the detail of the action, or to support his injured officers. It took us at least ten minutes to reach the front line in an armour-plated Land Rover, and to begin to piece together what had happened.

However, the theory of adaptive leadership suggests a degree of distress is necessary for achieving changes in thinking and behaviour. What Turbitt concluded was that the police were experiencing a disproportionate share of the distress. He therefore set about increasing the level of distress experienced by the demonstrators by organizing the rapid arrest of those offenders where there was clear video evidence of criminal behaviour.

One of Turbitt’s innovations in 2002 was to improve the collection of evidence in real time. A detective chief inspector was asked to co-ordinate the collection of ‘the best evidence of the worst offences by the worst offenders’. The video monitoring system made it possible to pan in close enough to identify specific individuals committing criminal acts, and actively build cases against them as events unfolded. He was then immediately able to direct arrests of people leaving the scene. The first arrests came two hours later and 25 miles away, as people were identified on a bus on their way back to Belfast. The bus had been tracked from the scene by a helicopter and was stopped by a tactical support group unit in an armoured Land Rover.

Within a few days, 31 people had been arrested, 20 of them charged with riot at common law, five with riotous behaviour, and five for disorderly behaviour. Common law riot is a serious charge and requires strong evidence to secure a conviction. This time that evidence was available on video, and those charged were denied bail and spent time on remand in jail – including some well-known members of the Orange Order and their supporters. This had never happened before at Drumcree, and caused a lot of discontent within the Orange community.
Turbitt came under pressure from many quarters to drop or to reduce the charges. But he judged the distress must be maintained if the necessary adaptive changes in thinking and behaviour were to take place. Eventually, in November 2003 at the High Court in Belfast, 15 people pleaded guilty to common law riot and received suspended prison sentences of 12 to 18 months.

Heifetz also suggests that for adaptive change to take place it is necessary to regulate the distress carefully – creating and maintaining enough heat to keep things cooking, but not so much that everything boils over and spoils. In preparing for the following year’s Drumcree Sunday demonstrations, Turbitt took steps to reduce the distress experienced by the leadership of the Orange Order by creating a holding environment. This would make it possible for them to engage in adaptive change.

2.4 Creating a Safe but Challenging ‘Holding Environment’

The insignia of the Orange Order flag paraded at Drumcree is a crown on top of a Bible. It is inscribed ‘Here We Stand: We Can Do No Other. Civil and Religious Liberty’. This symbolizes the order’s perception and presentation of itself in terms of loyalty to the British Crown and adherence to the authority of the Bible. The Drumcree Sunday march is seen by the order as a public celebration, and a defence of religious beliefs and historic political rights.

Turbitt’s new strategy challenged this self-perception. It forced the order to face up to, and take responsibility for, the painful fact that its supporters were also breaking the criminal law through riots and violence. Orange Order officials felt angry and humiliated by this, and by media coverage which portrayed them as law-breakers rather than as defenders of their rights and beliefs.

When Turbitt met LOL No 1 after Drumcree Sunday 2002, he initially expected to have to maintain or increase the level of the Orangemen’s distress in order to mobilize further adaptation in thinking and behaviour. Instead, he found that he had to reduce the distress and to create a safe holding environment within which wounds could heal, pride be restored and adaptive work resume.

A ‘holding environment’ is a physical or organizational space with clear boundaries. Within this, the painful and stretching work of adapting one’s own thinking and behaviour can be done. Turbitt had redrawn the physical holding environment by replacing the heavy military hardware of the maxi-CCO, with the lower key mini-CCO. This was intended to ‘normalize’ the situation and to restore law and order. But the destruction of this physical boundary by the demonstrators and their violence against the police demonstrated the amount of adaptive work that needed to be done before this normalisation could begin.

The police responded by re-asserting another kind of boundary and holding environment – the framework of the law. Criminal prosecutions took place where there was video and other evidence of law-breaking, whatever that person’s status within the Orange Order or the wider community. This was a public statement that although the boundaries of the physical holding environment might be breached, the boundary between law-keeping and law-breaking would be maintained, without fear or favour.

Benington has long argued that ‘divide and rule’ can be a very positive leadership strategy, when the basis of the division is moved to a higher level. In this case, the police were asserting that the
divisions between Orange and Green, unionist and republican, Protestant and Catholic, were subordinate to a higher division between those who observed the law and those who did not. Nelson Mandela and the ANC used a similar leadership strategy in post-apartheid South Africa. They established that post-apartheid government would protect and promote the interests of white as well as black and coloured people as long as they worked within the framework of democracy and the law.

2.5 Maintaining Disciplined Attention

In reviewing Drumcree 2002 and preparing for Drumcree 2003, Turbitt faced a great deal of pressure to row back on the adaptive leadership strategy. Many stakeholders wanted to revert to the previous strategy of confronting demonstrators with the police and army’s superior force. The Orange Order was very anxious to avoid any repeat of the previous year’s violence and pleaded for the restoration of the maxi-CCO.

Turbitt interpreted this as an attempt to avoid the adaptive challenge. Members would rather hide behind a large barrier set up by the police than take responsibility for law-breaking within their own ranks. The next challenge, therefore, was to maintain disciplined attention on the primary task. Turbitt insisted the police would enact the same strategy as the previous year, using a mini rather than a maxi-CCO, and prosecuting anyone found breaking the law. The adaptive challenge facing the Orange Order was therefore how to maintain law and order amongst their members and supporters, in order to avoid a repetition of the previous year’s arrests, criminal charges and public humiliation. The pressure on LOL No1 was all the greater because some of their members and supporters were still awaiting trial.

Turbitt and his colleagues had several discussions with LOL No1 in late 2002 and the first half of 2003. The aim was to keep focused and to help the order adapt its thinking and behaviour. By the time of Drumcree Sunday 2003, the Orange Order was ready to take responsibility for marshalling the Parade. This included supporting the police in setting up and manning a vehicle control point on Drumgoose Road early on the Sunday morning, to control access to the Drumcree area before the church service. Even more importantly perhaps, the Orange Order put its own orange tape in front of the CCO at the Drumcree Bridge. This symbolized its acceptance, albeit under protest, that this was the legal boundary within which it was going to conduct its parade.

The mood of the Drumcree Parade on Sunday 6 July 2003 was therefore quite different from that of the previous year. First, the wider political context for Northern Ireland politics had begun to change as a result of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, and the stop-go moves towards ceasefire and a democratic assembly. Second, the numbers involved in the Parade were much lower than previous years. Estimates suggest the number of Orangemen and their supporters was around 700 rather than 1000. Many were said to have stayed away because of the previous year’s arrests and criminal charges. The GRRC were also much less prominent than in previous years. They had almost no visible presence in any of the nationalist areas and residents were rumoured to have gone on holiday or away for the weekend to signify that the violence was an Orange problem and not theirs. Third, LOL No1 had taken the bold step of announcing that members would be willing to have face-to-face talks with the Garvaghy Road residents to try to achieve a resolution to the long-standing dispute. There were press leaks of a possible negotiated solution in which the Orange Order would march down Garvaghy Road by agreement with the nationalist residents. This created enormous
tension within the Orange Order both locally and nationally. The leaders of LOL No1 were accused of selling out by some of their supporters – adaptive leadership to tackle tough problems can often open up internal divisions. Fourth, it was clear the LOL No1 leadership had clearly grasped the nettle and was taking responsibility for ‘policing’ their parade within the framework of the law, albeit under protest.

The march from Portadown centre took place as usual, accompanied by bands playing traditional Protestant hymns. The sermon at the Drumcree church service included an appeal for an end to the conflict and for peace. After the service, speeches by the Orange leadership at the barrier at Drumcree Bridge protested about the decision of ‘an unelected quango’ - the Parades Commission - preventing British citizens from exercising their democratic rights. But it did not include an explicit attack upon the police or upon the nationalist community. The traditional letter of protest was handed in to the police at the barrier, but no attempt was made to pull the barrier down. It was the same mini-CCO as the previous year, with a warning notice displayed on it saying that any interference with the barrier was a criminal offence. No violence took place and the parade dispersed peacefully in the early afternoon.

In 2005 and 2006 the Police continued to pay disciplined attention to the Drumcree issue, and to pursue the same ‘adaptive leadership’ strategy, with the result that there was no violence of any kind at the parades. Indeed the Orange Parade was displaced from the front page news by other matters. For the first time in his career Turbitt was able to take summer holidays with his family in July!

2.6 Protecting the Voices without Authority

The adaptive leadership strategy used at Drumcree could not have been developed and implemented in a purely top-down manner. Of course, Turbitt had to gain the support of his superiors for the new approach, and to communicate it clearly to his subordinates within the command and control hierarchy of the police. In addition, he had to liaise horizontally with colleagues and counterparts within the army hierarchy, and make sure they understood, bought into and supported the new policing strategy. But while all this was necessary, it was not sufficient. The strategy also needed to engage a wide range of different stakeholders, some with formal authority and some without.

The biggest leadership challenge was to develop robust dialogue and negotiation with those in the Orange Order and the GRRC where changes in thinking and behaviour were needed. Turbitt and the police were willing to use state authority and the framework of the law to create a firm, reliable and consistent holding environment. However, the adaptive change could not have taken place unless, and until, the protagonists within the Orange Order accepted responsibility for ensuring their followers protested within the framework of the law. Turbitt had no authority to command the Orange Order to do this. The order’s active engagement in the adaptive change process required painstaking discussions and negotiations, not only with its formal leaders, but also with their local membership. The police needed to listen to and engage those without formal authority but with a great deal of influence.

It was fascinating to see how authority differed between the Orange Order and the Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition. The Orange Order think and act hierarchically – their prime loyalty is to the
Crown and the Bible. The Garvagh Road residents take their authority from below – they see themselves as a coalition of residents within the Garvagh Road grassroots community. They make their own democratic decisions about policy and refuse to accept instruction from above, even from Irish nationalist parties and politicians, let alone the British government.

2.7 Moving Between the Balcony and the Battlefield

The seventh principle, the need to move continuously between the balcony and the battlefield, challenges much traditional thinking about the need to separate strategy from operations.

In complex problem situations neither the diagnosis nor the solution are known or agreed. It is therefore not possible to develop a systematic strategy to be implemented in a linear way. This insight includes but exceeds the military insight that ‘even the best strategy does not survive the first contact with the enemy’. Under conditions of complexity, volatility and continuing uncertainty it may be necessary to keep recreating and adjusting the strategy in the light of changing conditions, and feedback from the environment.

Turbitt certainly found it helpful to keep moving between the balcony, which provides a strategic overview of the whole field of action and the different stakeholders, and the battlefield, where people are ‘in the trenches and up to their necks in the muck and the bullets’. The development of the adaptive leadership strategy involved a combination of both these perspectives Sophisticated future thinking, scenario planning, and the production of many volumes of strategic planning documents, must be combined with equally careful attention to operational and logistical detail.

As noted in the section above, Turbitt was badly thrown when his strategic overview of the action, via CCTV cameras in the police and army HQ lost contact with the frontline realities of the conflict at Drumcree Bridge in 2002. Turbitt tried to avoid a repetition at Drumcree 2003 by arranging for army engineers to build a physical ‘balcony’ right beside the bridge and the barrier. This tall scaffolding structure was camouflaged and equipped with CCTV monitor screens. It allowed Turbitt and the other police commanders to maintain a strategic overview while only being yards and seconds away from the live action battlefield at the Drumcree Bridge. It was a further imaginative, if slightly eccentric, attempt by Turbitt to translate theory into practice.

3 Conclusion

In one sense, it is difficult for the authors to draw any conclusions from this case study. In different ways we are both committed partisans, with a vested interest in interpreting the events in a particular way. Although Turbitt’s role was central to the events at Drumcree, we have tried to analyze the leadership issues less in terms of individual heroism and more in terms of a complex process of interaction between many different stakeholders within a volatile political economic context. We particularly welcome feedback and critical comment from those who are reading our account from a greater distance from the action.

But we feel pleased on three counts. We are first happy that a body of academic theory taught in a Business School has helped a practitioner to think and act in an innovative way about a particularly complex and challenging work situation. Second, we are pleased this innovative thinking and
behaviour seems to have contributed in a very practical material way to a break through in the long standing deadlock at Drumcree, and a measurable decrease in the violence and crime surrounding that event.

Third, we are glad that an academic and a practitioner have been able to work closely together, testing the application of theory in practice, and then thinking about the implications of the practice for the theory. Turbitt gained a great deal of insight from his exposure to academic thinking on the Warwick MPA, while Benington gained a great deal of insight from his exposure to the muck and the bullets at Drumcree over three successive July weekends.

Turbitt has now joined Warwick University as an associate fellow and is contributing to the further development and testing of leadership theory in classroom teaching. All that remains now, to complete the circle, would be for Benington to join the Police Service of Northern Ireland!

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