

While I was walking along the Peace Walls, I had the chance to reflect about my past and about my identity.

Being in Ireland had already brought me an increased awareness of my heritage, and the portion of our trip that brought us to Northern Ireland provided an even better opportunity to ponder my family's past.

a rift ran through

My father's side comes from Cork, Ireland, and are very proud of their Irish and Catholic heritage; I have vivid memories of attending mass with my father's family. However, there was always a rift, like a wall, that ran through my family. My dad, unlike his brother, chose to not marry Catholic and marry my mother, who was a practicing Protestant from English descent.

like a Wall

For so long, I never understood why my father's family never fully opened up to my mother, and by extension, me and my brother. It was always a mystery to me. My grandmother's cold attitude towards my mother and her contrasting sweetness to the rest of the family was always irrational to me. However, while walking along the Peace Wall, I started to understand.

silently explaining my own family conflict

Before my trip to Ireland, Irish history was largely a mystery to me. For example, when at the English customs and asked if I was going to Northern Ireland or Ireland, I shrugged and said "I don't know, uh Western?" Now though, my appreciation for the conflict, and its application to my family has become greater. The memory of the Wall now stands in my mind, silently explaining and helping me understand my own family conflict.

— David McCarthy