A SUSTAINABLE PEACE?

Research as a Contribution to Peace-Building in Northern Ireland
A Sustainable Peace?

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in Northern Ireland

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Preface

A Sustainable Peace?

‘Peace is not an absence of war, it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice’. (Baruch Spinoza)

In 2001, the Community Relations Unit (CRU) at the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) approached the Community Relations Council (CRC) to administer a new research element of the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland 2000 – 2006 (Peace II Programme).

CRC was glad to accept this new role and believed that it would develop and enhance existing and new approaches to peace building and reconciliation work. Funded under Measure 2.1 of the Peace Programme – Reconciliation for Sustainable Peace, the research sought to support organisations to investigate issues relating to the legacy of the past as well as to make practical recommendations and contributions to taking opportunities arising from the future.

Staff at CRC assessed 14 research proposals requesting c£1.2M in the first funding call. CRC awarded £468K to eight projects dealing with community relations issues involving young people, trade unions, human rights, politicians, interfaces, truth recovery processes and politically motivated former prisoners. The second tranche saw a shift towards more specific, thematic pieces of work which included: identifying good practice in peace-building work; measuring attitudes and behaviours with a view to influencing public policy and community relations; theoretical development (testing different theories and approaches to peace-building); and the economics of conflict in Northern Ireland. This tranche attracted twenty-two funding
applications requesting £2.4M. From it CRC was able to fund a further six projects (totalling £604K) researching areas of church involvement in peace-building work, mixed residential communities, active citizenship, social marginalisation/exclusion and voluntary action in community relations. The result of both of these calls was that an innovative and creative portfolio of research topics was able to be funded by CRC through the Peace Programme each of which would be advantageous to academics, politicians, policy makers and practitioners.

CRC has been pleased to be involved with every research project funded. Each piece has been produced to a high quality, has been used in academic journals and newspaper articles, and been the focus of workshops and seminars. It has also been the catalyst to debate and discussion on issues of conflict, history, politics, sectarianism, racism and how we acknowledge and deal with the past. This publication compiles twelve of the fourteen research projects. Each author has been asked to outline the aims and objectives of the research, illustrate its key findings, and make reflective comment on how this work could be practically used in future. Duncan Morrow, the Chief Executive Officer of the CRC, also makes a final contribution to set this work into context of work within a changing and more diverse Northern Ireland against a backdrop of work towards a more inclusive and shared society.

I would like to thank all of the researchers for their hard work in contributing to this publication. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank staff of the European Programme at CRC and, in particular, Dr. Cathy Gormley–Heenan (Research Officer 2001 – 2002), Libby Chapman (Research Officer 2003 – 2007) and Ray Mullan (Director of Communications at CRC).

I hope you find this an informative and useful publication in working towards a sustainable peace in Northern Ireland.

Jim Dennison
Director, European Programme, CRC
Introduction

A Sustainable Peace?

A Collective Contribution to Peace Building in Northern Ireland – Measure 2.1 Research

The Peace II Programme has made many contributions to Northern Ireland, but the inclusion of European Union funding for research projects that contribute to the understanding of issues related to peace building and reconciliation has been very advantageous. After all, research, through the production of reports, has the capacity to reach far beyond those initially involved in a project through the travelling power of the written word. Over the last four years, CRC has been working in conjunction with researchers from 14 unique research projects funded through Measure 2.1 of the Peace II Programme. Staff have worked directly with these researchers to support, develop and promote research which could help us to better understand the past and present challenges in Northern Ireland, thus equipping us to take actions for a better, shared future. Each in their own ways address issues of practical relevance to peace building and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. The challenge for CRC has been how to get the learning ‘out’ there, how to disseminate it most strategically and effectively, and how to get research reports off the shelves, on which they often sit and collect dust, and into the hands of those who would find them most useful.

In order to try to address this challenge, a two-pronged approach was devised. The first element of this approach entailed holding events to present research findings to the public. Each funded research project would hold at least one event to publicise its findings. Much thought went into the structure of these events as well as how to reach the appropriate audiences. Due to the diverse nature of the projects, staff worked with the researchers to devise the best ways in which their findings could be presented. Thus, these events took on a diversity of shapes including small seminars, focus groups, presentations at Annual General Meetings, small and large conferences, and workshops
coordinated by a number of groups. The key factor involved was tailoring each event in such a way that it would reach the audiences it needed to reach. There was also discussion about how to present findings in an accessible manner. What was apparent from these events was that as presentations were made and discussions took place amongst participants, research findings were making an impact and shaping the thinking of many of those present. While there are positive outcomes from such an approach, it was evident that the work was still only reaching a limited audience. It was clear that something else must be done to bring this work to a wider audience.

That ‘something else’ is the second strategy for disseminating the research, which comes in the form of this book. The researchers involved in the projects were each asked to provide a chapter for this publication. In their chapters the researchers were asked to explore how their work accomplished the following aspirations:

1. How has your research contributed to the headline aims of the Peace II fund (i.e. How has it made a contribution to promoting reconciliation for sustainable peace, addressed the legacy of the conflict and taken opportunities arising from peace)?

2. How has your research influenced policy and practice so as to make a lasting contribution to improved community life and relations?

3. Describe how your research has articulated and offered recommendations about the longer term challenges for reconciliation work in Northern Ireland.

The 13 chapters in this book represent the researchers’ responses to these challenging questions. As the topics addressed and the methods used by each project were diverse, the authors of these chapters have chosen to address these questions in their own unique ways. They have also been given the opportunity to express their own views, which may or may not necessarily reflect the views of CRC. While this has proved a challenge for me as an editor, the diversity of presentation and perspective adds to the work as a whole. It also adds a wealth of distinctive viewpoints to a number of debates within civil society.
A core concern over the life of this project has been how to present the research results to a larger audience. Based on the fact that the projects deal with topics as varied and vital as interfaces, young people and violence, housing, churches, politicians, former prisoners and mechanisms for dealing with the past, what is clear is that the work presented here provides an abundance of information and a launching point for further discussions on fundamental issues that Northern Ireland is seeking to address. The findings presented here may also be instructive for other societies that are emerging or are seeking to emerge from conflict. It is with this hope that this book is released.

**Libby Chapman**  
*Research Officer, European Programme, CRC*
Defining Reconciliation

The word ‘reconciliation’ is often attached to the project of peace building, but what does it actually mean? It is important to be able to set the context, to explore the theory of reconciliation in order to be able to translate it into practice. This section presents findings and recommendations from Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly’s research with Democratic Dialogue which sought to explore how reconciliation could be defined. Taking the concept of reconciliation from theory into considered practice is a challenge, but developing a clearer picture of this concept can influence thinking, policy and practice. It can also directly impact how society can seek to build positive relationships, acknowledge and deal with the past, develop a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society, and effect cultural, attitudinal, social, economic and political change.
The Challenge of Reconciliation: Translating Theory into Practice

Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly¹, Democratic Dialogue

Introduction

In January 2003, the authors embarked on a two-year research project into theories and practices of reconciliation in Northern Ireland. This research was motivated by the long-held observation that the term was poorly understood and developed in Northern Ireland and there was no agreed definition despite its increasingly common use. This observation came with an awareness that this lack of consensus about what reconciliation was, or might hope to achieve, was not confined to this post-conflict context. International literature demonstrates that reconciliation has multiple meanings, which can vary from context to context. There is an observable confusion between applying the term to the relationship between two individuals and to a broader political context of conflict between groups. A universal understanding of what reconciliation means is not available. This has prompted the comment that it is “as old as the hills and at the same time in a pre-infancy stage”.² To deepen understanding of the concept of reconciliation a two-year research project was carried out in Northern Ireland. This chapter outlines the motivations, methodology and main findings of this research. It specifically describes the development and evolution of a working definition of reconciliation and its adoption into practical usage in the arena of grant-making. It concludes by considering the continued challenges facing reconciliation in Northern Ireland.
Reconciliation in context

The term ‘reconciliation’ has become commonplace in political rhetoric. In political negotiations and in ‘peace processes’ since 1990 reconciliation is routinely, if often loosely, used to imply the setting aside of past animosities and establishing working relationships between former enemies. Internationally, it can be said to have moved from the seminary and the academy into public policy.3 And yet, as a concept, reconciliation has struggled to shake off its religious connotations. This is true in Northern Ireland, where, despite its frequent use in the broader grant-making and political arenas, the literature on reconciliation practice is dominated by a theological discourse.

Notable departures from the theologically based literature on reconciliation in Northern Ireland are the 2003 work by Norman Porter, The Elusive Quest: Reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and a report by ADM/CPA (now Border Action)4, both of which were useful contributions to the local debate. Porter argues for the importance of reconciliation as a moral and political ideal, which “makes demands on how we live and think as social, political and cultural beings”.5 Reconciliation, he believes, “entails embracing and engaging others who are different from us in a spirit of openness and with a view to expanding our horizons, healing our divisions and articulating common purposes... If taken seriously, it disturbs prejudice, disrupts practices and queries priorities”.6 There have also been some practical attempts to look at the issue. ADM/CPA undertook a consultation which produced the following definition of reconciliation: “Reconciliation is the term for the process whereby past trauma, injury and suffering is acknowledged and healing/restorative action is pursued; relationship breakdown is addressed and new sustainable relationships created; and where the culture and structures which gave rise to conflict and estrangement are transformed with a view to creating an equitable and interdependent community”.7 They also produced a helpful matrix8 that divides projects into different stages along a continuum towards reconciliation.

Like others, the work of Border Action was inspired by their role as an Intermediary Funding Body (IFB) for the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, an economic intervention by the European Union for Northern Ireland and the Border Counties (Monaghan, Cavan, Donegal,
Louth, Leitrim and Sligo) of the Republic of Ireland. Started in 1995, the Programme’s strategic aim was “to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation by increasing economic development and employment, promoting urban and rural regeneration, developing Cross-Border co-operation and extending social inclusion”. Over €536 million of grant support was dispersed between 1995 and 2000, known locally as PEACE I. Although many successes were recorded at the community level, debates rage about the Programme’s effectiveness in peacebuilding and reconciliation, and specifically its ability to address the causes of the conflict and to confront core issues underlying it. There was, it was noted, “insufficient embedding of concepts of peace and reconciliation in many measures of the programme”.9 Reflecting on PEACE I, Harvey wrote: “Although an understanding of issues of peace and reconciliation undoubtedly deepened during the PEACE Programme, this was not the same as the achievement of consensus within Northern Ireland on the nature of the conflict and the nature of the ‘solution’”.10

A mid-term review of the PEACE I programme found, among a range of issues, that groups had difficulty measuring impacts on reconciliation and were given little guidance on how to do so.11 In the same year, the three Northern Ireland members of the European Parliament, who had strongly lobbied the European Commission in support of such a programme, submitted their own mid-term review.12 While praising it overall, they similarly highlighted the Programme’s complexity and the problems of defining, and thus assessing, reconciliation. In ‘Taking Risks for Peace’, also published that year, the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust (NIVT)13, another IFB for the PEACE I programme, highlighted the different interpretations of it and expressed concerns about how peace and reconciliation were being defined in the broader political and constitutional context.14 In a later publication, the organisation proposed that the focus on bottom-up development and community activities be maintained, with priority given to social inclusion. But it suggested: “Greater efforts must be made to discuss and refine what is meant by and involved in the process of peace and reconciliation and to adopt effective and imaginative ways of monitoring the impact of the programme in supporting this process”.15 Following an extensive review within the European Commission and more publicly involving the many IFBs, a new five-year PEACE programme (called PEACE II) was introduced in 2000, worth approximately €500 million to Northern Ireland and the Border Counties.
With the promise of an additional half-billion Euros to be distributed before 2006 under the same peace and reconciliation banner, the term reconciliation could be said to have been wholly embraced by the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) as the grant-giving body. However, its use and understanding was not shared across the myriad of IFBs tasked with distribution of PEACE monies. In a mid-term review of PEACE II, Harvey noted that a clear definition of reconciliation remained as elusive as in the PEACE I Programme.\(^{16}\) Its absence meant that each body tasked with funding distribution defined the term differently impacting on how activities were viewed as contributing to reconciliation.\(^{17}\) This lack of conceptual clarity on reconciliation was one of the main reasons the authors decided to carry out the research described below. Perhaps ironically, it was to the PEACE Programme itself, under the Measure 2.1 ‘Reconciliation for Sustainable Peace’, administered by the Community Relations Council, research strand that a proposal was submitted. The two-year research project aimed to:

- explore how individuals from political parties and civil society conceptualised reconciliation in Northern Ireland; and
- unpack the concept of reconciliation, in the context of the definition proposed; and identify the roles and responsibilities of various structures – including political and community - in pursuing reconciliation locally.

**Methodology**

From the outset of the research it was clear that we would need to focus on discrete areas to explore conceptual and practical aspects of reconciliation at local levels, and how local politics constrains or promotes community-based reconciliation. Three district council areas were chosen as the units of analysis, offering a broad geographical spread, a range of religious composition and intercommunal tension, and differing community and voluntary-sector activity.\(^{18}\) To provide an external steer, a research advisory group was set up, which met every two months.\(^{19}\) A semi-structured interview questionnaire formed the main part of the research, which was piloted twice before data collection to ensure that the questions were clear and rigorous and addressed all the research themes. Three researchers\(^{20}\) were involved in conducting the interviews, and 58 individuals were interviewed in total.\(^{21}\)
Issues explored included: views and opinions on reconciliation; how it related to one’s work and voluntary activities; relevant policies, practices and structures; relationships between and within sectors; and who was deemed to hold ultimate responsibility for building reconciliation. The research generated rich data on the conceptualisation and application of reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Although it explored specific information in terms of relationships between councils and community groups, it also provided a broader picture of local views. The data from the interviews formed the basis of much of the research analysis and commentary. This was supplemented by discussions between the researchers and advisory group to identify cross-cutting themes, commonalities and differences. With limited space, only a small sample of the research findings emerging from the discussions with respondents is detailed here.

Findings

In brief, the following are some of the observations which were made in relation to the research findings. In terms of how individuals conceptualised reconciliation, we found that interviewees were open to a discussion on reconciliation and, in general terms, were willing to explore how it related to them and fitted with their work. While challenging ideas about reconciliation were aired, most interviewees were vague on the details of what it might entail or how it might be pursued. There was a lack of clarity among interviewees about what, specifically, reconciliation meant. Most tended to view this as an obstacle to inter-communal processes or policies and practices to address the legacy of the conflict. The lack of clarity was also a paradox, given that some interviewees were involved in work funded under the reconciliation banner. That said, many had their own understanding of the term, although a shared understanding was not evident.

Few respondents could articulate a vision of what a reconciled society would look like and most had difficulty relating reconciliation, as a concept, to their practice. It was not a term they used in their daily work, or felt comfortable in using to describe what they did. Of those engaged in self-described peace-building activities, most appeared more comfortable with ‘community relations’, ‘good relations’ or ‘community cohesion’. No interviewee advocated replacing these terms with ‘reconciliation’, although many seemed comfortable using them inter-changeably. That said, following
an analysis of responses, it was clear that, for many, the term ‘reconciliation’ implied a much deeper process than terms such as ‘good relations’ and ‘community cohesion’, for which some felt the communities with which they worked were not prepared. This was one reason they did not use the term.

European Union PEACE Programme funding heavily influenced respondents’ perceptions of the concept of reconciliation. Reconciliation as a concept was largely viewed through the prism of this Programme, despite few being clear about what an EU definition of reconciliation might be. Most felt the funding bodies provided little direction in this regard. One respondent, when asked ‘what is reconciliation?’ said: ‘It's what you have to put down on a form to get the money. It is funder-speak and it doesn’t mean much to people’.

**Defining Reconciliation**

To ensure a profound interrogation of the theme of reconciliation during our research, it was important to have a clear understanding of the themes under examination. We felt it would be unfair to probe respondents on what they thought reconciliation was without a thorough examination of the existing literature, local and international. While all are stimulating and useful, most of the literature was so wordy and complex it was largely inaccessible to the layperson. To stimulate discussion, we therefore sought to develop a definition of reconciliation which we felt was applicable to a society such as Northern Ireland which is emerging from conflict. In developing the definition we explored several definitions from the existing literature, including dictionaries, handbooks, academic journals and books by practitioners. We acknowledge the specific contribution of a number of texts in that regard.  

The result is the working definition below, which is by its nature incomplete. The definition was never intended to be the definitive statement on what reconciliation is or could be—rather a useful, though imperfect, tool which could provoke a deeper discussion with the many sectors which were the targets of our research.  

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We see reconciliation starting from the premise that to build peace, relationships require attention. Reconciliation is the process of addressing conflictual and fractured relationships, and this includes a range of activities. It is a voluntary act that cannot be imposed. A reconciliation process generally involves five interwoven and related strands:

1. Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society

Developing a vision of a shared future requires involving the whole of society at all levels. Although individuals may have different opinions or political beliefs, articulating a common vision of an interdependent, just, equitable, open and diverse society is a critical part of any reconciliation process.

2. Acknowledging and dealing with the past

The hurt, losses, truths and suffering of the past need to be acknowledged, with mechanisms providing for justice, healing, restitution or reparation, and restoration (including apologies if necessary and steps aimed at redress). To build reconciliation, individuals and institutions need to acknowledge their own role in the conflicts of the past, accepting and learning from this in a constructive way to guarantee non-repetition.

3. Building positive relationships

Relationships need to be actively built or renewed following violent conflict, addressing issues of trust, prejudice and intolerance in the process. This results in accepting commonalities and differences and embracing and engaging with those who are different from us.

4. Significant cultural and attitudinal change

Changes in how people relate to, and their attitudes towards, one another are also key. The culture of suspicion, fear, mistrust and violence can be broken down and opportunities and space opened up in which people can hear and be heard. A culture of respect for human rights and human difference can be developed, creating a context where each citizen becomes an active participant in society and feels a sense of belonging.
5. Substantial social, economic and political change

The social, economic and political structures which caused conflict and estrangement are identified, reconstructed or addressed, and transformed. Equity and equality are essential to building lasting relationships.

Two additional points remained crucial to the holistic understanding of the working definition. Reconciliation, for us, is the process of addressing these five strands. However, it is not solely about the outcome of doing so. Reconciliation processes by their nature contain paradoxes and tensions, not least because the social, interpersonal and political contexts are in constant flux. It is neither a neat, easy, nor necessarily linear process. Lederach\(^{27}\) notes that aspects of reconciliation can stand in tension with one another—such as articulating a long-term, interdependent future on the one hand and the need for justice on the other. Or, for example, the need to build positive relationships between groups and the need to foster economic change to ensure equality may require a change in resource allocations within a country. This could involve actions such as moving resources from the wealthy to the poor, all the while being mindful of how this may affect the building of positive relationships between groups. Of course, for a range of reasons it may not be possible for individuals grappling with a broken-down relationship ever to be absolutely equal, socially or economically, and so the possibility of continual ruptures and contradictions in the process of rebuilding relationship remains. We believe, therefore, that reconciliation is about addressing the five strands outlined, but simultaneously about the process of trying to address the complex paradoxes and tensions between them.

In fact, how the tensions are managed in many senses embodies the reconciliation process. This moves away from reconciliation being understood as an outcome (a mended relationship between individuals or groups or even states), but asks the more critical question about the ability of the relationship to manage tension. This understanding of reconciliation is more realistic in societies coming out of conflict where tensions are unavoidable (e.g. balancing the need for justice with the demands of a peace process to let political prisoners out of jail, as was the case in Northern Ireland and South Africa). There is no easy way of dealing with such dilemmas, and whatever option or approach is chosen will be fraught with challenges. Reconciliation as an activity therefore becomes about the measures, mechanisms and methods put in place to manage such tensions.
Reconciliation as a *process* becomes about how one practically achieves this. Reconciliation as a *concept* is essentially about the overall ability to manage such tensions.

Secondly, we must clearly acknowledge that reconciliation is a morally loaded concept and different people approach it from their own ideological perspectives. An individual’s understanding of reconciliation is generally informed by their basic beliefs about the world. Different ideologies of reconciliation can be identified, which for example would see a theologian approaching the concept differently than a human rights advocate. Thus we need to be aware that individuals will interpret differently the dimensions of reconciliation despite a general agreement on common strands. Trying to reconcile different ideological positions – say, with regard to what attitudes need to change – is precisely what the reconciliation endeavour is about.

**Reaction to the Definition**

The purpose of the research undertaken was not to come up with a definitive classification of reconciliation, but to explore how people themselves were working with the term and what resonances it had for their own work and context. However, we found that the model we posed provided some framework for those we interviewed. It allowed them to break down the concept of reconciliation and consider different aspects of the process.

As to the working definition, we found the reactions were overwhelmingly positive and brought the discussion to a different level. Several respondents were surprised by the definition’s complexity when it was discussed with the researchers. The impression we formed was that interviewees saw reconciliation as an abstract concept and welcomed having it broken down into possible component parts.

The research found that the term ‘reconciliation’ was not used a great deal on the ground. This reflects the limited effort to date to define or at least debate how to use the concept. This has left assumed meanings attached to it. Respondents chose at times not to use the term in their daily work because they feared it would scare people off, as was mentioned above. This might have arisen because of its perceived religious overtones or because reconciliation was understood somehow as ‘coming together’ in some process
of social and political transformation. The respondents (with a few exceptions) seemed instinctively to understand that reconciliation was deeper than limited coexistence. Some would argue that coexistence has always been the dominant model for the majority in Northern Ireland (especially the middle-class not directly affected by the conflict), and that this has led to separate development and perpetual division at the same time. Something more is needed.

**Reaction to Reconciliation Policy**

In relation to the practical delivery of reconciliation-focused initiatives at local level, our research suggested some readiness to engage in breaking down myopic understandings of the determinants of the conflict. However, the reaction to the term also implies that much groundwork remains to be done to create conditions conducive to a deeper process of reconciliation. The research clearly demonstrated a diversity of views on whether further responsibility for reconciliation should be devolved to local authorities, as envisaged under the *A Shared Future* policy framework published in March 2005.30 Perhaps not surprisingly, council staff and councillors were enthusiastic about this possibility, envisaging local authorities taking the lead in much of this work. At the same time they were also cautious of being given added responsibility without adequate planning. In the voluntary sector, however, respondents were hesitant, particularly if further funding streams were to be administered by the councils. A clear picture emerged of reconciliation being ‘politicised’ within councils and being treated in a partisan fashion. We found, certainly in community organisations, that local politicians were accused at times of continuing to play sectarian and polarising politics, which could undermine attempts to build relationships, change attitudes or assist in finding a common vision. The research underlined a long-held criticism that reconciliation practice, which includes community relations work, is not taken seriously by some council officials or elected representatives, and that Community Relations/Good Relations Officers often feel sidelined, with their work deemed of low priority. Most of those to whom we spoke would only argue for further responsibility for community relations and reconciliation being devolved to the proposed super-councils under the Review of Public Administration31 if there was unequivocal broader support, the resources were adequate and there was significant change in how councils and councillors would operate.
Dissemination

The findings of this two-year research project into theories and practices of reconciliation were disseminated publicly for the first time at a roundtable event for policy makers, practitioners, theorists and funders in Belfast during the summer of 2004. This event provoked a rich discussion and produced a further publication outlining different views on the concept. In essence, the roundtable concluded that how we define reconciliation matters, especially when enormous funding streams have been made available for ‘reconciliation work’ in societies like Northern Ireland. This first roundtable was attended by members of the SEUPB and it appears that this conclusion struck a note with it in terms of EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme. As previously noted, the EU had been criticised for failing to provide a clear definition of reconciliation and there were concerns that projects had been funded that did not have a clear peace and reconciliation focus. Indications are that the working definition posed at the roundtable and subsequent supporting publications offered the SEUPB an opportunity to begin to hone its own understanding of reconciliation as a concept and what it looks like in practice. Following the roundtable, the final research report of the project was completed and published and was complemented by summary papers, all of which were widely circulated both locally and internationally. In addition, the authors were requested to speak at many local conferences and events on the definition and the research findings.

Policy and Practice Impact

The publications flowing from the project, as well as the authors’ inputs in various forums, subsequently became important drivers within the SEUPB’s thinking. In late 2004, it was announced that the PEACE II Programme would be extended for two years (2005-2006), with an expenditure of €120 million, with all projects to be completed by December 2008. The result was that in 2005 the SEUPB formally adopted the working definition of reconciliation as the framework for how all future funding was to be allocated under the PEACE II+ Extension Programme (PEACE II+). The definition was directly subsumed within the PEACE II+ and formed part of the criteria for funding. The summary paper developed by the authors was widely distributed by the SEUPB and formed part of the application materials. All applications were then scored on what were termed ‘reconciliation criteria’, and these were, as
the documents outlining these criteria noted, based on what became known as the Hamber and Kelly Reconciliation Model or the Five Strand Model. All applicant projects to the Programme were now required to articulate how their project measured up against the five strands outlined in the working definition. To this end, the research made a direct impact on refocusing the funding policy of a significant driver for social change in the region – namely the EU PEACE Programme – and this is to be welcomed.

That said, the adoption of the model has had its challenges. Firstly, because the model was adopted so directly and the summary paper distributed with the funding application forms, it created the misperception the model was commissioned and developed exactly for this purpose. Ironically, one of the reasons for undertaking the research was because the authors felt bodies such as the SEUPB had not defined concepts such as reconciliation clearly. The authors cannot fault the SEUPB for adopting the definition as this can be seen as a direct response to previous criticisms. However, as the SEUPB began to change aspects of the definition for their direct funding application processes, the definition became integrally linked with funding in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties, resulting in some of the wider applications of the definition being missed.

The working definition was developed to guide thinking about reconciliation. We have also used it as a reconciliation diagnostic tool. The five strands could, for example, be used as a litmus test at the macro level for assessing the overall state of the reconciliation process in a given country.

For example, if one assesses the South African process between 1994 and 2007 one might conclude that the political leaders who negotiated the settlement presented a strong vision of the future (Strand 1), and that there were attempts to deal with the past through mechanisms such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Strand 2). However, direct relationship building programmes between black and white communities in South Africa were limited (Strand 3), and there was a hope that political reconciliation and institutional reform would broadly lead to attitudinal change, which has not been completely realised (Strand 4). It is the inequality between communities (Strand 5) that remains the biggest threat to lasting reconciliation. Thus, South Africa could be said to be strong on Strands 1 and 2, mediocre to poor on Strands 3 and 4, but particularly weak on Strand 5.
Northern Ireland is the mirror opposite. Until the resurrection of the Assembly on 8 May 2007 politicians failed to present a common vision of the future (Strand 1) and there has been a weak and piecemeal approach to dealing with the past (Strand 2). There had been substantial investment in direct relationship building between communities through the peace programme and community relations funding (Strand 3), and there was an assumption that this might lead to a change in attitudes, which has not been completely realised (Strand 4). The PEACE programme, and general social reform since the 1980s, have led to greater levels of equality (although not perfect) between communities, and there has been substantial investment in infrastructure in Northern Ireland since 1994 (Strand 5). Thus, Northern Ireland could be said to be weak on Strands 1 and 2, strong on Strand 3, mediocre to poor on Strand 4, and mediocre to strong on Strand 5.

The use of the definition as a macro diagnostic tool (which could arguably be applied at the community level) is a less than precise instrument, but it does provide some steer as to where policy efforts or community relations activity might be targeted in order to build reconciliation. Of course the use of the definition for funding purposes does not preclude this thinking because of its link to the EU Peace and Reconciliation funding Programme, but for many community and voluntary groups their primary view of the definition is now fairly mechanical and funding driven. They are interested in the definition in so far as it might impact on their funding application rather than reflecting on its wider applicability and assessing their own approach to reconciliation. The definition was designed for this exact purpose. Those who have used it in this way in analysing the reconciliation work of community groups have found it a robust tool. In addition, the authors routinely find when running workshops with voluntary and community groups on the definition that the wider applicability of the definition and thinking of it in the diagnostic sense, as well as decoupling it from the funding application process, is well received. The definition provides a framework for thinking about one’s work, as well as challenging one’s assumptions about what reconciliation work might entail.

In addition, the SEUPB adopted a simplified version of our working definition for the PEACE II+ Extension. Under the current funding arrangements, applicants are required to demonstrate how their project furthers reconciliation in relation to at least three of the strands which are scored, one of which must be related to the ‘building positive relationships’
strand. The risk of this approach is that a dynamic conceptualisation of reconciliation could become mechanised and compartmentalised, and another – albeit more elaborate – ‘tick-box exercise’. We envisaged the five strands of reconciliation as being deeply interdependent. Any reconciliation process should consider how it furthers reconciliation holistically, not just basing their analysis on a selection of the strands without consideration of how the strands relate to one another. The recent consultations started by SEUPB on the design of the forthcoming PEACE III Programme indicate a further reworking of the definition to incorporate it into the overall programme objectives, disaggregating the definition even further.41

The definition is intended, as was noted above, to stimulate thinking and to challenge those engaged in reconciliation work to reflect on their work in digestible components that are related holistically (i.e. not in simplistic or didactic terms as has been experienced in the past). The definition aimed to move beyond one-dimensional, binary and causal ways of thinking about the process of reconciliation to a more dynamic relational conceptualisation. The definition urges people to assess genuinely their contribution to reconciliation in a multifaceted way. Although the funding application process could still do this to a degree, we remain concerned that the propensity of funding agencies to bureaucratize processes while being pressured to disperse funds – coupled with the voluntary and community groups’ tendency to “chase the money” – might mean the definition becomes a means to an end. This could result in the more critical and reflective approach to thinking about reconciliation we hoped to achieve being underemphasised.

Finally, core to the definition is that the process of reconciliation, as John-Paul Lederach notes in his work, is deeply paradoxical or filled with tensions. The question therefore is how the voluntary and community sector can find ways to embrace the so-called paradoxical nature of reconciliation processes. Can models of reconciliation and community practice be operationalised in a way that recognises the complex nature of the reconciliation process and accommodates this? Some community and voluntary groups have managed to do this within the bounds of the funding application process, i.e. they use developing their application as a way of strategically discussing how their reconciliation work is unfolding critically. However, we fear such groups are in the minority.
Conclusion

In the final instance we are, as researchers and practitioners, interested in how our work impacts on the policy arena and in practice. We are pleased to see our work translated into a direct form of intervention. We also feel the SEUPB grasped the criticism that they were not sufficiently focused on reconciliation and attempted to address this issue. This, with our definition, has meant the programme has become more focused on reconciliation. Programmes which may have been funded in the past which had little or no focus on reconciliation (such as a limited economic regeneration programme with a poorly articulated vision of how this would lead to peace and reconciliation) now have to convey their reconciliation vision more clearly and improve their practice, or fail to be funded. This has raised criticisms from some, but in essence it remains our view (and we believe this to now be the view of SEUPB as well) that a so-called Peace and Reconciliation Programme should be focused on the issues it claims to be concerned with. The SEUPB has attempted to respond to this, and our definition has been part of this process and helped focus the programme.

That said, as we have suggested above, this process has not been as deep or as wide as we may have hoped. We believe that, if fully utilised, the definition shapes thinking on reconciliation in a way that is more holistic and not tied simply to funding in a criteria-driven way. However, it is now difficult to disentangle its application from the funding process and the narrowed criteria attached to it. Nevertheless, we feel the challenge for the future is exactly this. We need to focus on how the definition has actually shaped practice. We envisage the next stage of the work to be a reworking of the definition in line with the multiple lessons we have learned in discussions with funding agencies and voluntary and community groups locally and internationally. In addition, how one thinks about “measuring” reconciliation outcomes is also an important future project. In line with our understandings of the definition, this needs to centre on a process-driven, evaluative approach that focuses in on the tensions within the definition and reconciliation process, and not one that simply seeks to develop indicators for each strand in a silo-driven fashion.

At a wider level we believe the challenge at the heart of the reconciliation agenda in and about Northern Ireland remains. A clear finding of our research
was that many participants found the concept of reconciliation a threat or an obstacle within some communities. Instinctively, most respondents understood the term as implying something deeper than co-existence and felt it required transforming relationships within and between groups, or even arguably between states or between groups and the state. To some it challenged them beyond their comfort zones and signified something much deeper than ‘improved community life and relations’. We share this view. Although co-existence or ‘good relations’ might be a necessary first step, something more is needed in deeply divided societies. In our view, relationships matter, whether between large groups (societies and countries), small groups (communities) or individuals. There continues to be an onus on both the voluntary and community sector and the influential funding bodies to clarify their understanding of what they wish to achieve and the process by which they aim to achieve it. This needs to move beyond a didactic cross-community model to something infinitely more complex and substantially more challenging.
Notes

1. All correspondence to B.Hamber@ulster.ac.uk or grainnekelly@gmail.com.


4. A body established by Area Development Management, an intermediary company set up by the Republic of Ireland’s government in agreement with the European Commission to support local social and economic development and the statutory Combat Poverty Agency to distribute EU Peace monies, see http://www.borderaction.ie/.


6. Ibid.


10. Ibid.


13. Now known as the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.


17. Ibid.


19. The group provided vital support, offering valuable strategic direction, suggestions for contacts and guidance on methodology. The reference group comprised Sue Williams, Dominic Bryan, Ruth Moore and Libby Keys. We acknowledge and thank them for their input.

20. We are indebted to Gareth Higgins and Tony MacAulay, who undertook the field research in Armagh and Ballymena respectively. Gráinne Kelly undertook the research in Omagh.

21. Research interviews included: at least one representative from each political party represented in the council concerned (along with some independents); the CRO employed by the council; the Chief Executive and other relevant policy personnel; the Local Strategy Partnership manager and members (who have responsibility for the distribution of EU PEACE funding); employees and board members of voluntary organisations engaged in what could be considered reconciliation work,
including victims’ groups, ex-prisoners’ groups, community development organisations, networking or umbrella groups, youth groups and local organisations supporting ethnic minorities.


23. All findings are available in the final report. See Ibid.


25. Although this definition is defined in full below we only presented a summarised version to the respondents, which included an opening paragraph and the five sub-headings below.


29. Details of the reaction to the specific strands of the definition can be found in Hamber, B. & Kelly, G. (2005), *A Place for Reconciliation? Conflict and Locality in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Democratic Dialogue.

30. Community Relations Unit (2005), *A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Community Relations Unit, Office for the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.


32. The SEUPB are one of the six cross border Bodies set up under the “Agreement between the Government of Ireland and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland establishing implanting bodies” signed on 8 March 1999 (the British-Irish Agreement of 8 March 1999). The Body is charged with managing the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and the INTERREG IIIA Programme as well as elements of cross border EU Programmes.


36. Ibid.


38. Space does not permit, but a further level of complication could be added if one starts to analyse how a specific country has dealt with the paradoxes and tensions between the strands.


References


Community Relations Unit (2005), *A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Community Relations Unit, Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.


Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust (1997b), *Taking Risks for Peace: A midterm review by an intermediary funding body of the EU peace process.* Belfast: Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust.


Reconciliation –
Roles and Responsibilities

Reconciliation isn’t just the domain or responsibility of a few. Everyone has a part to play, and encouraging and equipping them to play it is the work of various groups and organisations in a number of sectors. The following chapters show how the community and voluntary sector, the churches, politicians, former prisoners and the trade unions each understand their roles and responsibilities toward reconciliation, with recommendations for strengthening these roles in the future. It is hoped that an exploration of the roles and responsibilities of these groups can be instructive for other groups wishing to consider their own contributions to peace building.
A Sustainable Peace?
Research as a Contribution to Peace Building in Northern Ireland
Voluntary Action and Community Development in Northern Ireland

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This chapter is in two parts. Part A will report on the way in which this project contributed to the headline aims of the Peace II fund. Part B will discuss the main findings of the research and will present some policy recommendations that arise from it. The methodology of the project is described in Appendix A.

Part A: The contribution of the research to the headline aims of Peace II, Measure 2.1

This project addresses three main aims. These are: firstly, “How has the project made a contribution to promoting reconciliation for sustainable peace, addressed the legacy of the conflict and taken opportunities arising from peace?”; secondly, “How has it influenced policy and practice so as to make a lasting contribution to improved community life and relations?”; and thirdly, “How has it articulated and offered recommendations about the longer term challenges for reconciliation work in Northern Ireland?”

Because this project is a research project and not a community-based intervention project, its main output is new knowledge and understanding, which is the source of the project’s potential to make a fundamental contribution to policy and practice. Part B of this article contains a summary and overview of some of the new knowledge and understanding generated by the project. For a fuller exposition of the outcomes of the research the reader is referred to the full project report, Voluntary Action and Community Relations in Northern Ireland, a 108 page report published by the University of Ulster in the Spring of 2007.
The voluntary and community sector is experiencing severe structural adjustment as Northern Ireland emerges from the conflict and new forms of governance are devised to take this jurisdiction into the future. While voluntary and community organisations make a valuable contribution to the social wellbeing of many people in Northern Ireland, this potential has been hampered through a lack of understanding of, and unwillingness thus far to address, the impact of inter-communal divisions on their work. The political climate in which Northern Ireland is making a transition to a more peaceful society has provided the opportunity for an examination of the contribution of these organisations to the healing of inter-communal divisions. One of the primary aims of the project was to identify the extent of inter-communal activity between the two main communities in Northern Ireland within these organisations and the implications this has for the role of civil society in promoting wider peace and reconciliation.

The project has addressed the legacy of the conflict on the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland. It has focused on the extent of inter-communal activity between the two main communities in Northern Ireland within these organisations and the implications this has for the role of civil society in promoting wider peace and reconciliation. The deep and usually unacknowledged inter-communal divisions within voluntary and community organisations that meet a wide variety of social need have a previously unknown impact on their work. Sectarian barriers both within and outside organisations have hampered their effectiveness and thereby disadvantaged their beneficiaries. Until the findings of this project were published, the extent of this disadvantage has been largely unacknowledged and unknown. During the period of open conflict, issues of divisions within organisations were invariably viewed as unsafe to deal with and, if brought into the open, to have a potentially deleterious and destabilising impact on their work. Consequently, the voluntary and community sector lacks both the conceptual tools and the knowledge necessary to address these unknowns adequately.

Specifically, this research project has:

- Identified the extent of inter-communal activity within the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland;
- Developed and provided new conceptual tools for thinking about the impact of the conflict on the work of voluntary and community organisations;
• Developed and provided opportunities for meeting, for reflection, for analysis and for synthesis of learning and experience;
• Identified good practice;
• Provided opportunities for international experience to inform Northern Ireland’s experience and to enhance learning.

This new knowledge and findings have provided an improved and strengthened knowledge-base and have thus provided resources for equipping voluntary and community organisations to better understand their potential and to grow and develop. Furthermore, the findings of this research are providing a space for these issues to be opened up and explored, and this process may provide or lead to further opportunities for developing good practice.

In addition to the above, the project has also provided information on:
• The ethnic/socio-political breakdown of the voluntary and community sector.
• The contribution of voluntary and community organisations to the resolution of inter-communal tensions in Northern Ireland.
• The extent to which ethnic identity differences within organisations adversely affect their work and thereby impact negatively on their beneficiaries.
• Ways in which voluntary and community sector organisations may contribute to promoting peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland society and how they may contribute to reducing sectarianism and ethnic tension.

Furthermore, the project has provided:

• Valid and reliable data on the extent and impact of intercommunal contact within the voluntary and community sector.
• New ways of thinking about the relationship between voluntary activity and ethnic/socio-political divisions in Northern Ireland.
• The opportunity for reflection and learning among voluntary and community organisations and within the policy community.
• The opportunity to enhance the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to be effective agents of change in a deeply divided society.
• Evidence of good practice in the field of community relations.
Part B: Main findings of the research and policy implications

The focus of our research has been to try to assess the potential contribution of voluntary and community organisations, in particular those that are not community relations specialists, to community relations in Northern Ireland. We have addressed this task by looking at the extent to which these organisations are embedded in either the Protestant or Catholic communities, the extent that any of their activities reach across the communal divide, and by drawing out some of the factors that either facilitate, or hinder, cross community work.

Our central research questions concerned the contribution (direct and indirect) of voluntary action in Northern Ireland to mediating between the deep communal divisions between the Protestant and Catholic communities. Specifically, we were concerned to explore the actual and potential contribution that was made by voluntary and community organisations to the building of trust between the two main competing communities in Northern Ireland. Our approach was informed by theory that emphasises the capacity of organisations within civil society to encompass networks and norms that can generate such trust and thus underpin social cohesion and the democratic effectiveness of government.

In 2005 the Good Relations Strategy of the government stated that “there is a clear recognition that the voluntary and community sector has made a powerful contribution to the achievement of better relations between communities. … The development of, and investment in, social capital – particularly bridging social capital – through community development can help promote relationships within and between communities”.1

Of the 4,500 or so voluntary and community organisations in Northern Ireland, a relatively small proportion are either ‘community relations’ specialists or organisations such as the Orange Order or the Gaelic Athletic Association, which exist exclusively within the context of specific communal identities. Prior to the present research little was known about the extent to which generalist voluntary and community organisations actively involve people from both communities or indeed the extent to which their participation in wider networks (that are built on issues that transcend communal divisions and identities) influences cross-community relations. And nothing was known about the impact this might have or about its potential for future development.
Findings

We preface the discussion of our findings with a brief overview of the issues as identified by the six ‘expert’ witnesses whom we interviewed at the beginning of the project. These individuals were selected to represent a range of views on the core issues addressed in this research and to provide perspectives from within government, from practitioners within the voluntary and community sector and from political and policy commentators.

The complexity of the relationship between civic action, intercommunal contact and the conflict in Northern Ireland is emphasised in their comments. There was recognition that there is a strong tendency for civic associations of all kinds to be structured along ethno/religious lines. One interviewee (Interviewee ‘A’)\(^2\) suggested that the default position in Northern Ireland was avoidance and separate development and that in effect there was a ‘huge societal effort’ to diluting cross-community initiatives. It was just too hard – “like pushing water up a hill”. Other interviewees reinforced this assessment. Interviewee ‘B’\(^3\) noted that the organisation for which he worked had emerged in the early 1990s as strongly male and Catholic in identity and had only been able to address this by a focused and self-conscious effort that had taken years of work.

Some respondents shared the view that voluntary action tends to be structured in quite different ways in the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland. The impact of these structural differences was noted by interviewee ‘E’:\(^4\)

*The outcome of that has been very different with Catholic areas being much stronger, ironically, probably because they have a longer history of not depending on the state. If you look in Belfast, at present Protestant working class areas, they’re all pretty grim areas that, I think, reflect much more the dynamics of socially excluded areas in England, Scotland and Wales. It’s the Catholic areas that are unusual in how effective they are in, dare I say it, managing poverty. They’re much more integrated.*

There was a strongly held view that the influx of state and European funding into the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland had in practice done little to moderate the differences between the two communities. Respondents noted a “lack of willingness” on the part of government to prioritise reconciliation in policy. Government had followed “the path of least resistance to go just along the communal ground” (Interviewee ‘C’). It was
suggested that government funding structures actually inhibited developments even where there was a demand among community organisations to work inter-communally.\textsuperscript{5} The view was expressed that the first European Union Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, which ran from 1994 until 2000, represented a wasted opportunity to pin down the relationship between community development and inter-communal relationships.\textsuperscript{6} The lack of a specific focus meant that it was too easy to avoid the issue.

One result of what appeared to some as long-term government acquiescence in separate development was that much of the voluntary sector appeared ill-equipped for the challenge presented by the need to self-consciously and reflexively engage with community relations issues. Many ignored the problem. There was a “sea of indifference” (Interviewee ‘A’). There was a general awareness, however, that despite the difficulties there was evidence of effective inter-community networking generated from local community-based organisations, as the following remarks indicate:

\textit{A lot of stuff goes on below the kind of media waterline and [a] huge amount of really positive stuff just never gets reported. There is a cadre of people in the voluntary and community sector who are committed to social change and, therefore, the broader raison d’ être for the voluntary community sector in our free society has been about social change and challenge. You’ll find people who have done more and more interesting projects in the voluntary sector than in any of the other sectors because they’re committed and they do it... There are specific opportunities in the voluntary sector.}

In particular there was a recognition that, at the level of élites within the voluntary and community sector, there was a high degree of inter-community networking that had now become pervasive and “normal”. This had helped create a leadership that had shared values and a shared recognition of the issues.

**Quantitative findings**

The key finding to emerge from an analysis of the community background of the members of management committees of voluntary and community organisations are contained in Table One.
Table One
Community Background of members of Voluntary Sector Management Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community background of members of management committees.</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Valid per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wholly Catholic</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly Catholic</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly Protestant</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholly Protestant</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total valid respondents</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>356</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly, the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland is embedded to a significant extent in each of the two main communities, in that 73.9% of organisations have management committees or boards of directors that are either wholly or mainly from one community (that is to say they have at least twice as many Protestants as Catholics or twice as many Catholics as Protestants). Just over a quarter of organisations (26.8%) are either wholly Protestant or Catholic in this respect.

Most respondents (70.9%) said there had been no change from their background. There were no significant differences between Catholic and Protestant organisations in this respect. Organisations that were wholly Catholic or Protestant were the least likely to report any movement. Of those that believed they had moved away from their background, almost half
(46.3%) gave the reason as having been involved in joint (cross-community) projects.

It should be noted, however, that the voluntary and community sector is an important site for cross-community mixing. Over 90% of respondents said their organisations provided opportunities for people to do things together and to cooperate on common tasks. Over three-quarters said these activities had indirect community relations spin-offs. Just 9% of respondents thought their staff or volunteers would feel anxious about cross-community contact in work-related settings.

Organisations were more likely to engage in discussion about equality of access to their services (60.1%) than to discuss the issue of Catholics and Protestants working together in the workplace (29.9%). On both issues, organisations whose management committees were wholly or mostly Catholic were more likely to do so than wholly or mainly Protestant organisations. Reflecting the high proportion of organisations that provide opportunities for mixing, there is a widely held view that by not addressing the issue of the divided society directly, organisations were opening up a ‘civic space’ in which people from widely differing political and religious backgrounds could meet and tackle issues they could agree on. Some see this as a virtue, but this approach may mean that organisations risk ignoring the impact of community divisions on their missions and operations.

More than 80% of organisations reported having experienced no external pressure to work in a more cross-community way, although more than half (57.8%) said there were people within their organisations who promoted cross-community work. The main barriers to greater cross-community engagement identified by organisations were their single identity origins (where this was the case) and the segregated nature of living patterns in Northern Ireland. Many organisations felt they lacked the capacity to address the issue and some identified an unhelpful funding environment.

Lack of political agreement is a significant barrier to greater cross-community working. At local level, a relatively stable political settlement with ‘buy-in’ from all political parties appears necessary for effective joint work between neighbouring areas with opposing identities. In its absence, Protestant communities in particular appear vulnerable to fragmentation and the influence of paramilitary organisations.
“Drivers” and “Obstacles” in relation to cross community working

We now turn to a consideration of the factors that promote, and those that inhibit, cross-community working in the voluntary and community sector. Survey respondents were asked if they experienced any external pressure for increased cross-community working or whether they could identify champions for change within their organisations.

These results show that more than 80% of organisations responding to the question reported experiencing no external pressure to work in a more cross-community way. There were differences between Protestant and Catholic organisations. Those that were wholly Catholic were the most likely to report external pressure for change, and those that were mostly Catholic, the least. Both mostly and wholly Protestant organisations were very close to the average figure of 80.7%. These results suggest that wholly Catholic organisations may be more sensitive to this issue than are wholly Protestant organisations, but it is very hard to interpret the results in the light of the much lower sense of pressure among mostly Catholic organisations. There was more evidence of internal promoters, and 57.8% of respondents reported that there were people within their organisations who promoted or ‘pushed’ for change. This disparity, as compared with the findings in relation to external pressures for change, suggests the possibility that there is a lack of external incentives for organisations to work in a more cross-community way. However, it is possible that, in a majority of organisations, the presence of champions for cross-community working represents the potential to do more if they were to be given more direct incentives.

The generally positive views expressed about cross-community contact among respondents were also reflected in the low levels of responses to questions about barriers or threats. Just 17.7% of respondents (n=356) identified any obstacles to engaging in cross-community initiatives. A large majority of organisations (71.1%) said that the question of Protestants and Catholics working together did not come up in discussions about organisations’ work, notwithstanding the reported presence of internal champions. The majority of those that did discuss the issue said it was not a contentious issue for them. However, a much larger proportion of organisations reported addressing equality of access to services, with 60.1% of respondents reported having done so and, for the large majority of these (78.1%), it was not at all divisive. These results suggest that the broad issue of
Protestant / Catholic relations is most readily addressed within the context of the service functions of organisations, but that there is a resistance to confronting the issue in more general contexts.

There were differences between the responses of the Protestant and the Catholic organizations to these questions. Taken together and comparing organisations that are wholly and mostly Catholic with those that are wholly and mostly Protestant, it is evident that the Protestant organisations are much less likely to engage with issues to do with cross-community working. The summary results are set out in Table Two. They show that a notably higher proportion of the all-Catholic organisations are both willing to discuss working together in general and to address the issue of equality of access to services than is the case for the all-Protestant group of organisations.

Table Two

Proportion of respondents who indicated willingness within their organisation to engage in discussion about cross community working and equal access to services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Catholics and Protestants working together: % saying 'yes'</th>
<th>Equal access to services for Catholics and Protestants: % saying 'yes'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Catholic organisations</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Protestant organisations</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All organisations</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The composition of management committees thus appears to have a bearing on the openness of organisations to address directly the relationship between communal divisions and their work. From the evidence presented the reasons are hard to deduce, as the observed relationship is likely to be affected by other factors; for example, the type of organisation or other defining features of the management committee members. It is also important to stress that this is not a causal relationship. Although organisations relatively more resistant to addressing the issues are predominantly from a Protestant background, this is not to say that the latter feature causes the former feature.
The extent and type of cross-community contact in organisations’ work

Most respondents indicated that the activities of their organisations provided opportunities for people from the two main communities to do things together and cooperate on common tasks. This was reflected in the 72.2% of all respondents who thought that the activities of their organisations had community relations spin-offs and the 77% who thought their organisations undertook community relations work indirectly. When asked a more specific question about community relations focused work, rather fewer responded positively. There were no significant differences in the responses of Protestant and Catholic organisations.

Our results confirm that the voluntary and community sector is an important site for cross-community mixing. In particular, the fact that 65% of respondents who thought their work encouraged people from the two main communities to work on community relations focused projects might be considered an encouragingly high proportion even if, in the light of the evidence already set out about the reluctance of organisations to discuss the issues internally, it is hard to work out what respondents had in mind in completing this section of the questionnaire. There may be a tendency to interpret activity that involves some degree of cross-community contact as having a community relations aspect; in retrospect it might have been worthwhile to ask respondents what they meant by the term ‘community relations’ in this context. But at a general level at least, there is evidence that the sector itself feels its work has community relations impacts.

In addition, our findings provided evidence that some single identity committees meet regularly with other organisations on a formal basis, although most do not. The numbers were small in each case, but almost one third (32.4%) of wholly Catholic organisations and 30% of wholly Protestant organisations reported that they meet with other organisations on this basis.

One measure of the impact of cross-community mixing is the extent to which friendships develop as a result. Overall, just under two thirds of all respondents (65.7%) said that friendships had developed as a result of the activities of their organisations. Examples were given by 35% of respondents, the commonest being friendships and socialising (20.5%), but opportunities provided by working together on joint projects were cited by a further 10% of respondents.
Survey respondents’ comments

The survey respondents were invited to submit their comments on the issues raised by the questionnaire on the back of the questionnaire document. 135 replied, representing 37.7% of respondents. The comments were amalgamated into a single file and analysed using NVivo data analysis software. Many of these comments were very illuminating and amplified the themes addressed in the questionnaire, providing an additional evidence-base for our findings and conclusions.

We discuss the evidence with reference to two broad themes. First, we consider the range of types of response under three headings: the deniers, the complacent and the engaged. Second, we discuss the kinds of barriers that respondents identified. This section concludes with a brief assessment of what is needed to change things, based on this evidence. It was apparent that responses tended to fall into one of three categories, although these should not be considered mutually exclusive and respondents were by no means internally consistent. First, there was a group of respondents that denied that the subject of the questionnaire was at all relevant to their work. The tone of their responses tended to be defensive. Respondents in this category tended to work with organisations that addressed the perceived needs of a group of people with a particular physical impairment or medical condition. Most are small and reliant on volunteers, although this was not always the case. The concern of some of these organisations is to assert the primacy of the medical condition as the focus of the organisation’s activities. There appears to be an assumption that any attempt to address topics such as the cross-community impact of the work of the organisation would pose a threat. It may simply be easier to work on the assumption that because the condition can affect anybody, the organisation’s neutrality and accessibility are self-evident. The largest of the three categories was composed of those that tended to assert that their work was cross-community, but who offered no evidence to support this statement. Some responses were more thoughtful than others but, in general, this assumption tended to be made on the basis of the non-communal focus of the organisations’ purposes. There thus appeared to be a tendency among respondents from thematic or issue-based organisations that cut across communal divisions to assume that this meant that their work was cross-community in fact.
In the eyes of many, it would seem that there is a perception of a direct pay-off between effectiveness in achieving a mission that cuts across communal divisions and in opening up an issue perceived as a threat. This reflects, we believe, a widely held view within the voluntary and community sector that, in turn, reflects an important strategy of general conflict management in Northern Ireland as a whole whereby everyday life is conducted on the principle that certain topics should never be alluded to except among close friends or within families and certainly never with strangers. As the respondents quoted here make clear, the fear of the consequences of breaching this etiquette keeps certain matters off the agenda.

In the face of such constraints, it was, however, noticeable that many of the respondents showed a clear and reflexive view of the impact of divisions on their organisations’ work and a determination to engage directly with its implications. Sometimes this involved self-conscious monitoring of cross-community availability of services and/or their impact.

**Barriers to cross-community work**

Many of the respondents provided reasons why it was difficult for their organisations to develop cross-community work. Their comments are consistent with the findings from the interviews conducted in the six case studies undertaken at the beginning of the project. Three kinds of barriers were identified: those that were internal to the organisations themselves; those that were a feature of the communities in which the organisations operated; and those that were a feature of the broader political or administrative environment. It should not be surprising that in a context where respondents may have felt they were laying themselves open to judgement, that very few mentioned difficulties within their organisations as a barrier, although one did mention a lack of capacity in a volunteer management committee, an issue that might be considered self-evident and one that would merit further investigation.

Respondents were more forthcoming about external barriers. One important theme in this respect, mentioned by several respondents, concerned difficulties in overcoming and addressing a sectarian background in their organisations’ histories. Organisations that had emerged from either one or the
other community found it challenging to change, often for understandable reasons.

Although the community mix of the regional committee appears to be mainly Protestant,
this simply reflects an historical situation where the volunteers seem to come from that
background. Volunteers on the regional committee seem to go on for ever, so there is little
in the way of a turnover. The criteria for service on the regional committee are task
related and perceived experience and competence [are] the paramount requirement[s].

The problem was felt particularly among thematic organisations that had
emerged from the Protestant community and that were addressing particular
issues. Doing something about this could be seen as just too difficult and
beyond the organisation’s capacity. Some respondents also mentioned a lack
of reciprocity. One victims’ group noted that it was difficult to work with other
groups that harboured grievances and “insisted on keeping their members in a
state of fear and resentment”.

Poor, or unavailable, infrastructure was also mentioned by a number of
respondents. This was often a result of the segregated nature of the areas in
which they worked. A lack of neutral space for meetings was a problem for
some, and one respondent argued strongly for more single identity work to
remedy deficiencies in infrastructure which were holding back development.
Another respondent considered that the propensity of government agencies to
fund small, single-identity organisations was holding back work that would
courage more cross-community contact. Poorly targeted and inconsistent
funding, or simply inadequate funding, were also considered to be barriers, but
there was also alleged to be a lack of consistency and long-term commitment
in funding arrangements. A more frequently mentioned barrier lay in the lack
of province-wide political agreement. Several respondents believed this made
it very difficult to make progress on the ground.

Improved community relations will become more of the reality when our politicians begin
to work with each other again and do the job for which they were elected.
Conclusions and recommendations

As the findings of this project reveal, many voluntary organisations try to ignore the issue of communal difference. At the end of this article it may be appropriate to ask what would need to change to encourage and enable voluntary organisations to move forward in the area of community relations. We make some suggestions about the features of a much more facilitative context that might emerge from a fresh approach to community relations policy.

Firstly, we suggest the introduction of a requirement in the letting of contracts or service agreements for the delivery of public services in which all organisations contracting for services should have equality impact assessments in place based on the requirements of Section 75 of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act. Next, we suggest the establishment of a special fund to support any external facilitation considered necessary or appropriate to enable management committees and staff groups to implement the necessary changes in attitudes, problem definition or structures. Such a fund would constitute a public acknowledgement of the potential usefulness of voluntary organisations in service delivery and the way they bring people together as a source of reconciliation, overcoming some of the criticism of the European Union Peace Programmes that they effectively discount or ignore this potential.

Further, in line with the aspiration in A Shared Future that public administration should become a driver for change, we emphasise that government departments and agencies, through which the bulk of public funding for voluntary organisations flows, must change also. Voluntary organisations could be invited to help lead this change process by developing demonstration models of good practice. Such opportunities might help to reinforce the necessary cultural shift within voluntary organisations themselves by providing further incentives for a model of good practice that would have equality of access and dealing with difference at its heart. Public policy can create a more facilitative context, but voluntary and community organisations, as independent actors, must also recognise their own profound responsibilities to make the shared civic space that they have created into a more effective means of taking forward the task of reconciliation in Northern Ireland.
Appendix A: Research questions and Methodology

The research commenced in October 2004 with a comprehensive literature review and with some preliminary interviews. Six scoping interviews were first conducted with leading ‘experts’ in civil society and community relations in Northern Ireland, working in government agencies and major voluntary organisations. These were designed to elicit a range of views about perceptions of the central issues and were used to help design the research instruments. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed in full and subjected to a manual content analysis. The main phase of the research process comprised a two stage design. The first part was a postal questionnaire sent to a sample of 535 organisations and the second stage involved detailed interviewing in six case study areas. The sampling frame for the postal questionnaire utilised an earlier survey of volunteer management committees. In that study a questionnaire had been sent to the known population of voluntary and community associations in Northern Ireland.\(^9\) The sampling frame for the present project comprised all the respondents to the earlier survey, which had already been validated as representative of the population of organisations.\(^10\) In the present study a total of 358 responses was achieved, a response rate of 67%. Of these, 135 (37.7% of respondents) supplied additional written comments. These comments were analysed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software.

The second stage of the research design comprised six area case studies. The areas chosen were two urban areas in each of (London)Derry and Belfast and two other towns and their immediate rural hinterlands, one in the east of Northern Ireland with a majority Protestant population and one in the west with a majority Catholic population. In each area, semi-structured interviews were carried out with leaders (either paid staff or chair people of management committees) of between six and eight organisations, varying in type from large, service providing or social economy organisations to small, community-based self-help organisations. In each area interviews were also conducted with officials in local government offices. In all, thirty-eight interviews were completed. Each lasted between one hour and one hour and a half. Most interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Two interviews comprised guided group discussions. These were recorded by notes, rather than on tape, as were two others, one at the request of the interviewee and the other as a result of technical failure of the recording equipment. The data was analysed using NVivo data analysis software.
Notes

1. OFMDFM, 2005, p. 57.
4. Interviewed, 05/01/2005.
6. The first EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation was approved at the Berlin Summit in 1994 and channelled 350m ECUs into Northern Ireland between 1994 and 2000 in addition to the Structural Funds. Just under 60% of this was allocated to voluntary and community organizations, mostly around broadly conceived programmes of social inclusion. A perceived weakness of focus on addressing inter-communal relationships in the Programme was addressed by the much tighter criteria applied by its successor Programme, ‘Peace II’, running from 2000 to 2006.
7. Note: wholly Catholic +100%, Mainly Catholic = Catholic Protestant ratio>2:1, Mixed = Protestant Catholic Ratio < 2:1, Mainly Protestant = Protestant Catholic ratio > 2:1, Wholly Protestant = 100% Protestant.
8. The two organisations were asked: ‘Does the question of Protestants and Catholics working together in your organisation ever come up in your discussions of your organisations’ work?’ and: ‘Do people in your organisation ever discuss how to make the services you offer equally available to people in the Protestant and Catholic Communities?’
10. Ibid.
References


Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (2005), The State of the Sector IV, Belfast: NICVA.

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Politicians and Community Relations in Northern Ireland

Gillian Robinson, Frank Foley and Georgina Owens, INCORE

In 2004, INCORE initiated the project ‘Politicians and Community Relations’ as part of its programme of research into Management of Diversity issues. The research arose from a recognition of the importance of the potential role of politicians in contributing to the improvement of community relations, while also taking into account the perception that in some cases politicians foment division between communities rather than assist in peace-building.

Several specific issues highlight the need for such a research study at this time. First, Northern Ireland faces problems of continuing sectarianism that undermine the building of sustainable peace. This problem pervades every sector and level of society and manifests itself most publicly in ‘interface’ areas in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry, particularly in relation to tensions arising from parading and local territorial power. Some local politicians have tried to contribute positively to resolve these issues but some people in the communities consider not all such political interventions to be helpful. Second, under devolution the transfer of responsibility for community relations to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) gave additional responsibility to local politicians. It is important that they, and the communities they serve, are well informed about the current debate on what this responsibility entails. Third, it appeared that this research could contribute to the development of further understanding between those involved in the Local Strategy Partnerships which were set up to develop cooperation between politicians, business people, trade unions and community groups on issues of funding for social and economic needs. Finally, this study followed the Review of Community Relations Policy process and fed into that process.
The aim of the project was to acquire a greater understanding of the perspectives of Northern Ireland’s politicians on community relations and communal division. The role of politicians in the broad task of building good relations was explored from their own perspectives as well as that of others. Politicians’ opinions on community relations work were also examined. This research provides a knowledge base for the development of a more cohesive and agreed approach to community relations work by politicians, practitioners and policy makers. INCORE interviewed politicians and community leaders from areas that had previously experienced violence and polarization. The report and a subsequent conference addressing research findings included discussion on issues of particular concern to them including how communities and their politicians relate to the broader community relations agenda.

The project’s specific objectives were:

- To outline how Northern Ireland politicians understand and define ‘community relations’.
- To achieve an understanding of how current community relations work is viewed by Northern Ireland politicians, and the variety of such views.
- To achieve an understanding of the kinds of community relations work politicians are willing to support, as well as the kinds of work that they are reluctant to support.
- To outline the range of political opinion on policy responses to communal division.
- To present community relations practitioners and community sector views on the role of politicians in the task of improving community relations.

The report addresses the legacy of conflict by reflecting on how some of Unionism’s and Nationalism’s political priorities interplay with their perspectives on the community relations issues. Issues such as inequality, paramilitarism, constitutional uncertainty and the role of the state were identified by politicians as impacting on their attitudes to community relations. While concerns about these issues led some politicians to question the point of improving relations, others believed that progress on these issues was crucial to the task of building good relations. There were also those who argued that these and other divisive political issues should be made a core subject of dialogue and exchange in the field of community relations work.
The project also stimulated political reflection and debate on community relations issues and contributed to policy and practice in the area. One indicator of this was the elected representatives’ participation in the project survey and their willingness to be interviewed, which demonstrated political interest in the issue of community relations. A survey questionnaire was mailed to 621 politicians (all MLAs and district Councillors) and 190 completed questionnaires were returned with responses from across the political spectrum. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 34 individuals (20 politicians and 14 community relations and public sector representatives). A focus group for District Council Community Relations Officers was held and a Politicians Seminar was arranged to discuss the preliminary findings. Frank Foley presented the findings to approximately seventy participants at the conference, ‘Politicians and Community Relations in Northern Ireland’, where there was a panel discussion involving politicians, community and voluntary sector professionals, public agency representatives, and conference participants, who endorsed the findings of the report.

Through the survey, interviews, Politicians Seminar and Conference, INCORE encouraged politicians to engage in detailed thinking about the future of community relations in Northern Ireland and their role in addressing communal division.

By engaging with community relations practitioners, community and voluntary sector representatives, policy makers and public agency representatives on the subject of politicians and community relations, INCORE stimulated thinking among all these groups regarding how their role fits in with that of politicians. In addition, by reporting the views of all sides to each other and bringing together all suggestions for collaboration into one report, INCORE has stimulated the production of synergies and provided a knowledge-base for the agreement of a more co-ordinated approach to community relations policy amongst all these groups, including between political parties.

Finally, the project articulated and offered recommendations about the longer term challenges for reconciliation work in Northern Ireland, and the overall findings of the project which are presented in the main body of this chapter demonstrate this. The chapter begins with an exploration of what community relations means to politicians and what they believe the objectives
of community relations work should be. It then examines politicians’ evaluations of community relations work and the community sector who largely deliver such work. It moves then to look at politicians’ commitment to community relations and where community relations fit into these priorities. The chapter concludes by examining the sensitive issue of whether there should be greater involvement of elected representatives in community relations programs both from the politicians and from other perspectives.

1. What Community Relations means for politicians

A review of politicians’ understanding of the term, ‘community relations’ displayed various approaches. Definitions ranged from tolerance and respect for diversity to more generalised terms such as ‘knowing exactly what is going on in your community’ and an emphasis on the ‘quality of interaction’ between people from different backgrounds. Others saw community relations as an industry, profession or ‘a field of study that has been brought about and propagated by those who have an interest in it’. While most politicians acknowledged that poor community relations were the responsibility of all in society, there were different views of where the problem of poor community relations lies.

The project findings were mixed as there are two sides to politicians’ overall vision for the community. Faced with the options of a divided, but stable society or a shared society that ensures respect for cultural diversity, a large majority of politicians agree that a ‘shared future’ should indeed be the objective of Government policy. However, when the question of how to actually make policy changes in support of this objective was raised, most politicians responded sceptically or argued that a more integrated society should be seen as a long-term goal. Eighty two percent of politicians agreed that the objective of community relations policy should be ‘to encourage a more shared and integrated society, whilst also promoting respect for cultural diversity’. In interviews, most politicians took a sceptical or gradualist approach to policy changes that support this objective. While some elected representatives favoured sharing-oriented policy reforms in education, housing and public service provision, many warned that moves to foster a more shared society should not compromise personal values or cultural traditions. Some representatives questioned whether the aim of a shared
society was realistic in the short term and were sceptical about the policies that might result from this objective. Although some politicians did favour policy reforms, most tended to regard such proposals as unrealistic, inappropriate and, in some cases, dangerous.

2. Politicians’ evaluations of community relations work

The project survey and interviews gave elected representatives an opportunity to state their opinions on projects and initiatives in the field of community relations designed to improve relations in Northern Ireland. In interviews, politicians’ reactions to the work of the community and voluntary sector ranged from enthusiastic to withering. The project survey indicated that a majority of politicians are broadly supportive of the community sector’s community relations work, with a significant minority showing a neutral or sceptical attitude. Survey respondents answered a series of questions on topics ranging from their overall opinion of community relations work to their opinions on the management and impact of community relations programmes. Responding to the first question, 10% of politicians thought that the current approach to policy and work on community relations was ‘basically right’, while a further 59% deemed the approach to be ‘broadly right although it needs some improvements’ – thus indicating broad support for current community relations work among almost 70% of elected representatives. However, a significant minority of 28% believed that the current approach to community relations policy and work was ‘basically wrong’ or ‘seriously misguided’.

There was a significant degree of ambivalence found amongst politicians regarding the management, impact and the concept of ‘community relations’ work. Political opinion on the management of community relations in Northern Ireland is divided. Considerable dissatisfaction was shown with the management of community relations policy and programmes by the government and, to a lesser extent, the Community Relations Council (CRC). A total of 49% expressed broad support for the Government’s efforts in this regard, while 61% showed broad support for the CRC. However, a significant minority (45%) thought that the Government’s policy management needs to be radically reformed, whilst just over a third (35%) called for radical reform of the CRC’s management of community relations programmes. Thus, while a
significant minority expressed deep dissatisfaction with the current approach in this field, over two-thirds of politicians signalled their broad support for the current approach to community relations work. A majority of respondents were also positive about the future with 59% agreeing that community relations work will have a positive impact on relations in future years. A majority of politicians (58%) also agreed with the statement that community relations work ‘is impacting as well as possible given the limited nature of the resources allocated to it’.

In the survey and in interviews, then, a significant degree of ambivalence was found amongst politicians vis-à-vis the management, impact and the concept of ‘community relations’ work, generally conceived. However, when elected representatives were asked about their attitude to particular instances of work in the field of community relations, significantly higher levels of support were recorded. Asked in the survey about projects designed to promote respect for diversity (e.g. joint cultural events and educational initiatives), 64% of politicians felt that such projects were ‘very important’ and 28% thought them to be ‘fairly important’ – amounting to 92% support in total. A similar proportion – 93% of respondents – thought that the facilitation of dialogue between individuals and groups from different sections of the community was either very important (57%) or fairly important (36%). Large majorities of elected representatives acknowledged the importance of particular instances of work such as cultural exchanges designed to promote respect for diversity and interface work. Finally, politicians and community sector representatives agreed that good working relationships have been built between them in Local Strategy Partnerships.

As part of the research carried out for this project, a Focus Group composing ten District Council Community Relations Officers (CROs) reflected on their first hand experience of working with politicians, including councillors’ attitudes to exchange, interface and single identity work. CROs said that some councillors had a preference for ‘soft focus’ exchanges or meetings, for example tea parties or music societies, and believed that this ‘is great community relations work because the society has Catholic and Protestant members’. It was thought that such councillors did not understand the nature of community relations work and this was a cause for concern given their decision-making role vis-à-vis CR funding. It was also noted that councillors were eager to support and fund single identity work, particularly projects focussed on the vulnerable, including children, or the socially
disadvantaged. A community worker suggested that while most councillors had a good understanding of the community sector, many MLAs expect the sector to mimic political methods of organisation. In other words, such Assembly members believe that small community groups should fall under larger umbrellas according to the representative model of democracy that they, as politicians, recognise. Thus, it was argued that politicians fail to see how a participatory model of democracy validates the existence of a large number of small community groups.\(^3\)

Some political interviewees were clear about their lack of contact with the community and voluntary sector: ‘I haven’t actually met any of them and I am not conscious of having met any of them, I’m not conscious of any of them asking me...it is a niggly sort of thing and you know maybe it is like air: they are there but I am not conscious of them there, but they are right beside me.’\(^4\)

Other politicians had more contact with the community sector, for example, through involvement in the District Partnerships and their successor, the Local Strategy Partnerships (LSPs).\(^5\) Although there was a history of mutual suspicion between politicians and the community sector, according to one MLA, the LSPs provided a structure within which trust grew between the two groups at local level. This positive experience of the partnership model should be taken into account in decisions about the future makeup of the CRC and the role of district councils in CR programme management, it was argued.\(^6\)

The traditional context for relations between the political and community sectors changed in 1999 when local politicians took governmental power for the first time in over twenty-five years. However, the short-lived nature of that exercise of power, the LSP experience and other factors mean that political-community sector relations are in a state of flux. It is in this context that politicians, in their different ways, make a judgement on the community and voluntary sector and issue proposals on the management of community relations programmes at local and regional level.

3. Political commitment to Community Relations

Interviewees from the two largest parties at the time the research was carried out (the DUP and Sinn Féin) expressed how some of Unionism’s and Nationalism’s political priorities interplay with their perspectives on the community relations issue. A recent policy paper highlighted two issues that
are often cited by politicians as reasons for the continuance of community division. These are: inequality on the one hand, and paramilitarism and constitutional uncertainty on the other.\textsuperscript{7} As one politician interviewed for this project put it, ‘\textit{I think there are bigger issues in Northern Ireland to settle before you can push either community to do \textit{[community relations work]}}’\textsuperscript{8}

Issues such as inequality, paramilitarism, constitutional uncertainty and the role of the state were identified by politicians as impacting their attitudes to community relations. While concerns about these issues led some politicians to question the point of improving relations, others believed that progress was crucial to the task of building good relations. Some argued that divisive political issues should be a core subject in the dialogue and exchange in community relations work.

Outside of the debate over sharing and integration, other questions were addressed by interviewees from the community and voluntary sector, the most basic of these being: what is politicians’ level of commitment to improving community relations? On the one hand, elected representatives’ rate of participation in the project survey and willingness to be interviewed itself indicates a considerable level of political interest in the issue of community relations. On the other hand, the assessments of community relations and community sector interviewees ranged from those who were sympathetic to politicians’ dilemmas regarding reconciliation to those who focused on political neglect of community relations issues and the failure to challenge highly segregated living patterns. However, whether supportive or critical of politicians, the common thread running through all assessments from the community and voluntary sector interviewees was that building good relations and a shared society does not feature highly on most politicians’ list of priorities. Indeed the survey results indicate that as many as half the elected representatives (50\%) themselves recognise that politicians are not doing enough to support the development of better community relations.

People working in the field of community relations had mixed views on the role of politicians in community relations. On the positive side, some interviewees pointed out that Northern Ireland has changed considerably for the better over the last ten years and that the greatest leaps forward have been made at the political level, by politicians.\textsuperscript{9} Some CROs and other CR practitioners also spoke highly of individual politicians who have engaged constructively in private discussions with members of other parties. This often depended on the practitioners or facilitators building up credibility with the
politicians over a number of years. However, other agencies that have organised ‘residentialss’ and conferences aimed at building political understanding between parties found a lack of engagement on the part of the politicians they met. One organiser of such events felt that the parties would send along a person for an hour just so they could ‘tick the box’ and say that they had attended. She didn’t get any real sense that the politicians involved were interested in building relationships or improving their understanding of each other. Another spoke of some politicians’ eyes glazing over at the very mention of the phrase ‘shared future’. A CRO said that some councillors lack commitment to even discussing community relations issues. ‘They will come along’, he said, ‘they will let hot air out for the first two or three minutes and [then] they will leave because they will get their expenses’. Another CRO said that councillors, in her experience, ignored their district’s Community Relations Programme except at times of crisis, at which point they claimed, ‘it is not my responsibility’, and asked: ‘what is the Good Relations programme doing [about this]?’ As we have seen, the survey findings indicate that many politicians themselves recognise that there is an issue to be addressed here – that they may not be doing enough to support the development of better community relations.

4. Involvement in the management of Community Relations work

A large majority of politicians agreed that elected representatives should be given a greater role in public bodies tasked with the management of community relations work, although many acknowledged the need for safeguards to avoid a politicisation of community relations programmes. The main arguments made in favour of such a move at regional level were the desirability of greater democratic accountability and financial prudence, as well as the opportunity it would provide for elected representatives to take greater responsibility for community relations. Similar arguments were made in favour of the proposal that district councils should be given an enhanced role in community relations decision-making and funding allocation.

People working in the area of community relations gave a mixed reaction to these proposals on the regional and local administration of CR programmes. On the issue of accountability, it was argued that bodies such as the CRC are held to account, financially and in other respects, through very clear Annual Reports. One does not have to give politicians direct ‘control of everything’ in
order to have effective accountability, it was maintained. One community sector representative argued for a separation of roles, which may ensure a balance between overall democratic control of policy and independent implementation of that policy: ‘politicians, I think, should concern themselves with ultimately setting the political agenda and the policy agenda. I think they then need organisations like the CRC to operationalise these things’. Referring to politicians’ arguments on financial prudence, a public sector worker said that the nature of community relations work meant that one could not always point to an obvious return on investment in this area. However, this was no argument for a reduction in funding, nor did this worker see why politicians would spend community relations funding more wisely than the current administrators. Community relations workers do not, for example, agree that politicians should exercise majority control over the CRC, for a number of reasons. There were fears about the potential implications of a more political CRC. These include: a fear that political disagreement or instability could be transferred to the level of community relations programmes in certain circumstances; misgivings about the potential for clientelism; and a belief that some MLAs and councillors lack understanding of the nature of community relations work. One community sector representative warned that at times of political instability or crisis, conflict at the political level could be transferred by politicians to the level of community relations programmes – and that this would be ‘disastrous’. A local community leader said that the CRC has shown integrity and consistency in its decision-making. If the funding body started to change as political party agendas changed, that might create an ‘unsettled environment’, she feared: ‘it would permeate right down to the grassroots, oh God help us, that would be a disaster’.

Although not in favour of majority political control over the CRC, community relations workers did see the value of increased political representation on the body. Another community relations practitioner said that insufficient political input was one of the weaknesses of the CRC. However, politicians should not form a majority on its board, he said, because community relations does not have a strong legal framework (unlike policing, for example), and there would be little to stop them from ‘playing politics’ with this politically contested field of activity. Elected representatives should constitute more than 30% of the board, but less than 50%, he concluded. A third community relations practitioner also claimed that benefits could be derived from greater political involvement in community relations: ‘It would be an interesting discussion to get into with politicians’. If they could ‘narrow
their egos a bit’ to be part of, but not a political majority on, a board, ‘that could be an important sign to the wider community that they are part of the society, not all of it’. Politicians needed to build up more of a track record in the field, he argued. If they rose to the challenge and implemented policies across all Government departments in support of trust-building and a more shared society, he believed that a political majority could be established on the CRC or its successor in five or ten years. A fourth practitioner felt that the CRC was ready to accept more politicians on its board, perhaps constituting up to a third of the board’s membership. There was a need, he said, for the community relations sector to build on their existing contact with elected representatives: ‘to talk to politicians, to bring them in’. It was important in this context for the main community relations structure to be fixed so that the nature of the relationship would be clear and ‘we [would] know how we are talking to each other’.  

The issue of political involvement in the CRC is closely related to debates on the role of district councils in the fostering of good community relations. The Shared Future consultation document stated that local government should play the central role in co-coordinating action at local level, and that the current District Council Community Relations Programmes should be upgraded and given additional funding and high level support. In this context, a question arises as to whether district councils should be given more power over decision-making and funding allocation in the field of community relations work. Politicians make the case for such a move on the basis of similar principles to those outlined above in the case of the CRC: financial prudence, democratic accountability and increased political responsibility. In their assessments of this proposal, community relations and community sector workers developed their arguments on politicians and community relations at regional level (see above), and made some additional points.

Some public and community sector interviewees set a challenge for politicians and the Government: if local government is to be given more responsibility over community relations programmes, then councils and elected members should be required to assume a similarly enhanced role in the area of civic leadership. One interviewee said that there should be a legislative requirement on councils to build good relations into all areas of their work. A similarly fundamental requirement should be placed on councillors to assume a greater role in the promotion of good relations in their areas – it should not be left to chance, he said. The director of a community sector organisation
said that if the granting of an enhanced role to councils and local politicians was simply about exerting political control over community groups and other local actors, then nobody would co-operate with them. However, if councils could take the opportunity to become a ‘lead body for civic representation in their area’, then they could achieve results with their enhanced powers, he argued: ‘if they can convince people that what they are trying to do is animate and co-ordinate... the voluntary and community groups, the local private sector, the local trade unions...[to] harness all their energies... I think they could add an awful lot of value in the community relations field and all others as well’.25

Community relations and community sector workers do see potential benefits in the appointment of more (although not a majority) of politicians to the board of the CRC. These include the argument, made by some politicians, that a greater involvement of elected representatives in regional and local community relations administration could increase their knowledge of the issues and encourage them to take greater political responsibility for community relations. Regardless of the outcome of this debate, some politicians and community relations/community sector representatives highlighted the need for more regular and better quality communication between elected representatives and those working in the field of community relations. Overall, elected representatives and other interviewees perceived both dangers and opportunities in the proposals for greater political involvement in community relations programmes.

Conclusion: the role of politicians in building good relations

Beyond the issue of specific community relations programmes, the INCORE project also reflected on the ‘bigger picture’ of politicians and community relations. Regardless of the position of elected representatives in community relations funding administration, a more basic question remains: what roles can politicians play in the task of improving community relations in Northern Ireland? Responding to this question, political and community sector interviewees considered the future role of elected representatives at two distinct levels. First, as one community relations practitioner put it, the politicians’ role is ‘to become Government’.26 Although some ironic references were made to the fact that society had to wait for a Direct Rule
Minister to launch the *A Shared Future* document, there was widespread agreement on the importance for community relations of a fully functioning Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly. It was felt that the suspension of devolution in 2002 meant that ‘all of a sudden, there [was] no message of hope coming from the top’, thus making it more difficult for local leaders to ‘keep their communities on board’ and maintain peaceful relations at ground level. SDLP and Alliance Party representatives emphasised that if the devolved institutions are restored, any new power-sharing executive would need to implement a cross-departmental strategy that would build community relations considerations into every public policy decision. A member of the latter party argued that the four largest parties in Northern Ireland should develop more detailed policies in support of good relations and challenge the trend whereby ‘arguably…the most important issue in Northern Ireland has been relegated right down the political agenda’. A community relations practitioner added that such policies should reflect the fundamental principles of community relations: equity, respect for diversity and recognition of interdependence. Politicians were also urged to make the task of improving relations a central preoccupation of Government, rather than ‘mak[ing] it look marginal’.

Second, political, community and public sector interviewees made a number of suggestions concerning the less well defined issue of how elected representatives can best provide civic leadership. Reflecting on both the private and public spheres, interviewees called for more trust-building work, as well as compacts between politicians regarding their public behaviour and involvement in disputes.

This study confirms that politicians want a greater say in the management of community relations programmes, but are they prepared to make a greater commitment to the concomitant role of providing civic leadership? This, in essence, is the question posed by people working in the field of community relations. If political parties want to secure the agreement of this sector to their assumption of a greater role in peace-building policy and work, they will need to demonstrate that community relations can be as high a priority to them as equality, security or political development. In this scenario, the roles of civic leadership and political involvement in community relations programmes could complement each other to the benefit of funding recipients and the wider society.
Notes

1. This chapter draws extensively from the main report from this study. Foley, F. and Robinson, G. (2004), Politicians and Community Relations in Northern Ireland. INCORE, University of Ulster. We acknowledge the contribution of Elisabeth Porter.

2. Comments made at a CRO Focus Group (1 June 2004); Project interview with a CR practitioner (23 June 2004).

3. Project interview with a member of a local community organization (4 May 2004).

4. Project interview with a senior member of the UUP (14 May 2004).


6. Project interview with a member of the SDLP (27 May 2004). Also see Section 9.


8. Project interview with a member of the DUP (21 May 2004).

9. For example, project interview with the director of a community relations organisation (30 April 2004).

10. Comments made at a CRO Focus Group (1 June 2004); Project interview with a CR practitioner (23 June 2004); Project interview with a CR practitioner (22 June 2004).

11. Project interview with the director of a community sector organisation (14 May 2004).
12. Project interview with the director of a community relations organisation (21 June 2004).

13. Comments made at a CRO Focus Group (1 June 2004).

14. Project interview with the director of a community sector organisation (14 May 2004).

15. Project interview with the director of a community sector organisation (13 May 2004).

16. Project interview with a public sector worker in the field of community relations (15 June 2004).

17. Project interview with the director of a community sector organisation (14 May 2004).

18. Project interview with the director of a community sector organisation (14 May 2004).


21. Project interview with the director of a community relations organisation (30 April 2004).


23. See above, pp. 52-56.

24. Project interview with a senior member of a public agency (1 July 2004).

25. Project interview with the director of a community sector organisation (13 May 2004).
26. Project interview with the director of a community relations organisation (30 April 2004).

27. Project interview with a local community leader (17 May 2004). Similar affirmations of the importance of devolved government for community relations were made by other interviewees, for example: project interview with the director of a community sector organisation (13 May 2004); project interview with a local community development leader (18 May 2004).


29. Project interview with the director of a community relations organisation (30 April 2004).

30. Project interview with the director of a community relations organisation (30 April 2004).
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A Sustainable Peace?
Research as a Contribution to Peace Building in Northern Ireland
Former Political Prisoners and Conflict Transformation

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Introduction

Between 1969 and the signing of the 1998 Belfast Agreement that established the basis for a new power-sharing devolved administration for Northern Ireland, the conflict (colloquially termed ‘the Troubles’) cost the lives of over 3600 people. The subsequent transition of Northern Ireland from violent conflict to peace has been a tortuous and as yet unresolved process.

In addition to the renegotiation of structures of governance, it also involves deeply contested issues of cultural identity and claims to territory that are, in themselves, at the very root of political disagreements. The creation of a post-conflict society also involves establishing a set of inclusive civic principles. As in other conflicts, a key element within the process often described as ‘conflict transformation’ has been the release and reintegration of politically motivated prisoners.2

Under the terms of the 1998 Agreement, all qualifying paramilitary prisoners belonging to organizations on ceasefire were to be released from prison within two years, irrespective of the seriousness of their offence. Although the numbers actually released under these provisions constituted only a small percentage of ‘activists’ imprisoned as a result of the conflict, it remains emblematic of the major compromises which the peace process has entailed. Moreover, the peace process would have lacked the contribution of former political prisoners to conflict transformation in Northern Ireland in broader historical, political and social contexts.
To date, 449 prisoners have been released (195 Loyalist, 242 Republican and 12 non-aligned) under the provisions of the 1998 Agreement. These men and women joined thousands of other former prisoners who had already served prison sentences related to the conflict. While it is notoriously difficult to estimate numbers imprisoned as a result of the recent conflict in Northern Ireland, some sources approximate totals of 15,000 Republicans and between 5,000 and 10,000 Loyalists.

The research upon which this chapter is based aimed to examine the background to political imprisonment and the ways in which groups of politically motivated former prisoners have been and continue to be involved in peace-building and societal transition. We wished also to evaluate the opportunities, constraints and impediments which shape their activities in this field.

Much of the literature concerning former combatants and politically motivated former prisoners tends to regard such individuals as passive objects to whom ‘reintegrative measures’ should be applied. They often appear as an acute ‘managerial’ problem which must be overseen and transformed by the elites lest they should destabilise the inevitably delicate process. In a similar fashion to political imprisonment during the conflict, the ongoing debate concerning former prisoners may be used as a prism through which to view other elements of the body politic beyond the state.

It is no accident that the issue of prisoner release initially proved the greatest obstacle to the Unionist ‘Yes’ campaign during the referenda on the Belfast Agreement. At one level, this could be attributed to the horrors of the previous thirty years. Such an explanation is inadequate, however, ignoring as it does the fact that Nationalists voted overwhelmingly for an Agreement which saw Loyalist prisoners released, despite the often-indiscriminate nature of Loyalist violence against them. For many Unionists, on the other hand, ‘terrorism’ (including loyalist violence) was an aberration on the body politic perpetuated by irredentist ‘men of violence’ for whatever combination of criminal or psychopathic reasons. This refusal to recognise political motivation insulated Unionism from what Republicans, Nationalist and some Loyalists would view as a moral culpability in the reproduction of conflict.
However, once the British government’s *de facto* position on the recognition of political motivation had so manifestly changed (through prisoner releases) this represented part of a broader betrayal of the fiction of blamelessness. Thus prisoner releases and resettlement have led to accusations that the mainstream denial of the political nature of the conflict is intellectually untenable. As Brian Gormally has argued,

*...prisoners and former prisoners are the most obvious ex-combatants, the visible concentration of everything people feel about the conflict...they are the perpetrators of numerous atrocities, the enemies of democracy and civilization incarnate.*

It is little wonder that the role of former prisoners in the future polity remains hotly disputed in many quarters as they are viewed as the most visible representation of conflict. The meaning of imprisonment and the post-imprisonment experience is generally hidden from public discourse. The conflict transformation work, for example, undertaken by former prisoners is generally obscured, especially by tabloid accounts of criminality and other anti-social behaviour. Similarly, the establishment of linkages with state agencies, in itself a sign of conflict transformation, is also generally hidden.

Our research offered a direct challenge to such a myopic interpretation of conflict transformation through highlighting the role former prisoners and the groups that represent them have undertaken as dynamic agents of change. They have provided significant leadership both within armed groups and communities that were adversely affected by the outplaying of conflict. They have also offered conspicuous examples of political generosity which is often unmatched by self-professed ‘moderates’. In effect, former prisoner groups should be accurately viewed as a key *resource* in the process of conflict transformation in a society that continues to move beyond a pernicious past.

The research project aided a wider appreciation of a relatively obscured form of conflict transformation. It not only placed such work in the public domain but in so doing promoted the idea that conflict transformation is being delivered among those who are the most ‘vilified’ section of society. The identification of former prisoner group activity indicated contributions to promoting reconciliation for sustainable peace, how former prisoners are addressing the legacy of the conflict and how former prisoner groups are taking up the opportunities arising from funding such as European Peace funds. The study undertaken has also become central within the debate concerning de-criminalisation and has provided examples of how inter-
community activity between former prisoners aids an improvement in wider inter-community relationships. In sum, the research undertaken pinpointed the location of conflict transformation, how the work of former prisoner groups is both meaningful and exact and how it underpins the development of the wider peace process.

**Researching Former Prisoners and Key Findings**

The field research for this study, which took place in 2004-2005, represents the first sustained quantitative and qualitative attempt to involve both Republicans and Loyalists in an investigation of the impact of imprisonment and the role of politically motivated former prisoners in the process of conflict transformation in Northern Ireland. More widely, this is the first large-scale study of politically motivated former prisoners in any recent conflict. Thus, while the micro-circumstances of political engagement in Northern Ireland have shifted after the 2006 St. Andrews Agreement and the restoration of the Assembly, the central principles of our study remain intact and offer the possibility of helping understand conflict transformation. It is also readily apparent that the dialogue accompanying recent political transitions has been informed and articulated through the common prison experiences of former Loyalist and Republican combatants.

We are concerned with Republican and Loyalist former prisoner groups ‘working within and working between’, which refers to their involvement in dialogue and various forms of community work, both within their own communities and with the ‘other’ community. In our evaluation of the contribution of politically motivated former prisoners to conflict transformation in Northern Ireland, the research undertaken had seven specific objectives:

* To trace the evolution and development of former prisoner groups;
* To evaluate the impacts of imprisonment and release on the personal lives of former prisoners;
* To assess the constraints imposed on former prisoners as agents of change in conflict transformation by the residual criminalisation arising from their status;
* To determine the potential of the former prisoner community in challenging intra-community tensions and evaluate their potential and
actual contribution to conflict transformation at the inter-community level;

- To compare and contrast the effectiveness of Loyalist and Republican former prisoners as agents of change within their own communities;
- To explore the concept of reintegration through which former prisoners can act as agents of social and communal transformation within the broader political and civic processes of negotiating conflict transformation in Northern Ireland;
- To examine the broader international and legal context of this study of politically motivated former prisoners in one particular process of conflict transformation.

The spatial focus of the research undertaken was Republican-Nationalist parts of North Belfast and the Greater Shankill area. Participants, who included former prisoners and members of their families, generally originated from highly segregated and socially deprived inner city interface communities within which former prisoner groups operate. Thus the majority of the participants in this study live within areas that are targeted with regard to social need as well as policies that aim to dilute the impact of cultural and political tension. Two politically motivated former prisoner groups facilitated the research undertaken. The Loyalist Former Prisoners Interpretive Centre (EPIC) was established on Belfast’s Shankill Road in 1995 while Tar Isteach (meaning ‘come in’) was launched in 1999 and is based in the New Lodge area of inner North Belfast.

Understanding the position, vulnerabilities and future of the former prisoner community in the context of conflict transformation creates important research challenges and requires a diverse and interlinked empirical design. Our integrated research methodology incorporated a questionnaire survey, a workshop, focus group meetings and semi-structured interviews.

1. A questionnaire survey of former prisoners and their relatives was employed to help determine:

- the impact of imprisonment on family life, the effect and nature of release upon self-esteem and other social relationships, and the relevance of these processes to resistance and post-conflict transition;
- the extent and importance of residual criminalisation;
• attitudes to and impediments in conflict transformation and peace-building at the community scale.

The sample included 150 Republican and 150 Loyalist former prisoners and their relatives (75 of each). Interviews were carried out during 2004. It was important to give equal measure to family members, who have been under-investigated in earlier studies – an omission that undermines the meaning of the impact of imprisonment upon communities and also obscures a series of complex intra-community relationships. Although the bulk of the Republican former prisoners were connected to the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), some respondents had been involved in other Republican organizations and a few had no connection with any particular group but had been imprisoned for politically motivated activities. The Loyalist respondents were drawn from within the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Red Hand Commando (RHC) groups.

2. There were three elements to the qualitative dimension of the research.

Firstly, a one-day workshop, jointly involving both Republican and Loyalist former prisoners, was held to explore their sometimes different and sometimes shared key concerns in terms of the impacts of imprisonment and residual criminalisation and also their abilities to deliver on conflict transformation. Secondly, in order to provide a discursive and informed context for the results of the questionnaire survey, two focus group meetings were held separately with Loyalist and Republican former prisoners. Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a number of key former prisoners and representatives of former prisoner groups and also members of ‘civic society’ during 2005. All meetings and interviews were taped with the permission of participants and interviewees and subsequently transcribed. Key findings emerged concerning the impact of imprisonment, present socio-economic status, the effects of criminalisation and issues around victimhood and community involvement.

It was found that imprisonment had a series of effects on both the prisoners and their families which, however, did not necessarily disappear with the end of incarceration. The effects of imprisonment included: difficulties with physical and psychological health; relationship problems; complications in
obtaining and maintaining long-term employment; and concerns centred around coping with life on the outside. Small majorities of both Republican (54.1 per cent) and Loyalist (54.7 per cent) former prisoners stated that they had found it easier to cope on a day-to-day basis while in prison. This reflected a lack of worries over personal finances and strong and durable senses of the comradeship developed during imprisonment. The different representation of prisoner issues within each community may partly explain the finding that around 70 per cent of Republican former prisoners compared to half of the Loyalist respondents found it ‘easy to fit in with’ their community after release. Similarly, 85.3 per cent of Republican former prisoners compared to half as many Loyalists claimed that they had received support from their community whilst they were imprisoned. After excluding those in employment and pensioners, the observed levels of economic inactivity were 58.2 per cent and 44 per cent respectively for Republican and Loyalist former prisoners.

Former prisoners and their families experienced a significant loss of persons known to them during the conflict. A third of Loyalist and Republican former prisoners lost a family member as a result of political violence. Furthermore, a third of Republican relatives had members of their families killed compared to 17.8 per cent of Loyalist relatives. More than half of the Republican former prisoners (54.7 per cent) and 48 per cent of their relatives had lost a relative, compared to 42.7 per cent of Loyalist former prisoners and their relatives. A highly significant 94.7 per cent of Republican former prisoners and 78.7 per cent of Loyalist former prisoners had lost a friend, as had 58.7 per cent of Republican relatives and 45.9 per cent of Loyalist relatives. Given that deaths in the ‘Troubles’ equated to around 0.25 per cent of the population of Northern Ireland, it is evident that the prisoner community experienced intense loss.

A major issue for former prisoners is that of criminalisation. Former prisoners cannot adopt children, have difficulties gaining visas for places such as the USA, can be excluded from holding PSV driving licenses and must denote themselves as having a criminal record when required, although most contend that given their political motivation the tag of criminal is injudicious. Former prisoner groups contend that Section 10 of the Belfast Agreement, which dealt specifically with the issue of politically motivated prisoners in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, recognises their demands for
civil and political inclusion. Within a wider policy context the final part of Section 10 of the Agreement states that:

*The Governments continue to recognise the importance of measures to facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into the community by providing support both prior to and after release, including assistance directed towards availing of employment opportunities, re-training and/or re-skilling, and further education.*

A key stumbling block in the development of a more inclusive role for politically motivated former prisoners is that the law does not distinguish between criminal activity and political conflict. This lack of a formal differentiation between politically motivated and non-politically motivated prisoners is reflected in the argument between those who seek the decriminalisation of politically motivated acts and those who wish to maintain an ideology and practice of criminalisation.

Various legislation that concerns anti-discriminatory practices explicitly permits the non-employment of those, as stated in section 2 (4) of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, whose political opinions

*approve or accept the use of violence for political ends, connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland, including the use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any section of the public in fear.*

In addition, the same Act states that discrimination against those who are ‘proven’ to be a threat to national security, public safety and public order is not unlawful. In simple terms, the possession of a conviction which upholds membership of a proscribed organization permits the denial of an interview and any significant legal redress to job applicants who are politically motivated former prisoners. Moreover, in recent years, there has been a significant growth in employers seeking knowledge regarding ‘criminal’ convictions, not least to identify potential employees who are sex offenders. This legislation is viewed by former prisoner groups as a form of criminalisation that is intimately connected to discrimination in general, considering the reality that employers and employment agencies hold information regarding former prisoners at their disposal. Unsurprisingly, 78.2 per cent of all former prisoners surveyed stated an example of instances of criminalisation of which they were aware.
The level of involvement in community organisations among Republican respondents was much higher (81.3 per cent) than for loyalists (46.7 per cent). Yet it would be assumed that even the lower Loyalist level is much higher than the level of involvement within the non-prisoner community. The most significant form of community-based activity related to interface work and the attempts made to dilute the rationale and impact of violence within highly segregated areas. Two-thirds of Republicans compared to one third of Loyalist former prisoners had been involved in such efforts. There was also extensive involvement in youth and community safety/restorative justice schemes that aimed to lower incidents of anti-social behaviour. Former prisoners involved in community work were asked if, as a result of that work, they had had contact with people with different political perspectives. More Republican (56 per cent) compared to Loyalist former prisoners (44 per cent) stated that such work had led to contact with people with other political allegiances.

While the highest percentages of contacts were with other political perspectives within the broad Republican and Loyalist ideologies, there were also relatively small but still significant contacts across the divide, indicating, perhaps, the role that former prisoners can play in conflict transformation. Nearly one-third of Loyalists had made contact with Sinn Féin. There was more contact between Loyalists and Sinn Féin than with the SDLP. Twenty eight per cent of Republican prisoners had been in contact with the PUP. Interestingly, excepting only the PUP, more Loyalists had contact with Sinn Féin than with any of the Unionist parties within their own area. This may reflect the marginalisation Loyalists feel with respect to the other Unionist organisations but also some openness to the possibilities for conflict transformation.

The issue of victimhood constitutes another important actual or potential constraint on the capabilities of former prisoner groups to work effectively within and without their communities. As McEvoy acknowledges, the status of who is ‘victim … in a violent conflict is itself a contested issue’. So too is the status of the perpetrator, who indeed might prefer the terminology of ‘protagonist’ or ‘combatant’. The former prisoners in the Republican focus group argued strongly that ‘victim’ is a highly contested term which does not belong to any particular section of society and also one that cannot be used ‘on every occasion’. The question of victimhood and the attitudes to it lie at the core of the issues surrounding the stigmatisation and demonisation of
politically motivated former prisoners. While impacting on the acceptability of those groups as agents of conflict transformation, attitudes to victimhood also help shape the ideologies of the groups.

The contested, hierarchical nature of victimhood was quite explicit in the data collected. A large majority of respondents in the questionnaire survey (over 90%) agreed that civilians were victims as were their own communities. Over 80 per cent of respondents stated that their families had been victims. Eighty per cent of Republican former prisoners and 77.3 per cent of Republican relatives agreed that Republicans were victims compared to 48 per cent of Loyalist former prisoners and 66.7 per cent of Loyalist relatives. Nearly as many Republican (66.7 per cent) as Loyalist former prisoners (70.6 per cent) held that Loyalists were victims. There were relatively similar responses with regard to prisoners, although more Republican (74.7 per cent) than Loyalist former prisoners (58.6 per cent) self-identified as victims.

Turning to attitudes to representatives of the state, two crucial points emerge. First, Loyalist former prisoners were much less inclined than their relatives to classify representatives of the security forces as victims. Secondly, and conversely, Republican relatives had a far more exclusive view of victimhood than did Republican former prisoners. Thus, comparable shares of Republican (40 per cent) and Loyalist former prisoners (49.3 per cent) stated that police officers were victims, although 30.6 per cent of the Republican former prisoner group disagreed with this proposition, compared to only 8 per cent of Loyalists. The difference was much more marked in the responses from relatives, three quarters of Loyalist relatives believing that RUC members had been victims compared to only one-fifth of Republican relatives. Interestingly, more Republican relatives (52 per cent) than Republican former prisoners argued against police officers being classified as victims. Unsurprisingly, Loyalists were more likely than Republicans to regard the British Army as victims although the percentage (58.7 per cent) is perhaps less clear-cut than might be anticipated; however, only 6.6 per cent of Loyalist former prisoners disagreed with this proposition compared to 33.4 per cent of Republicans.
**Conflict Transformation**

As is detailed in the report that formed the basis of this research project, politically motivated former prisoners have explicitly articulated the needs of their constituency during political transitions through reference to and utilisation of the equality and human rights framework. They have lodged legal challenges, made important interventions for greater legislative protections for former prisoners and have maintained a constant pressure on bodies such as the Human Rights Commission and Equality Commission to ensure that the rights of such individuals remained firmly on their respective agendas.

Indeed, as one of the authors has argued elsewhere, the increased recourse by serving prisoners and their political allies to the use of law during the conflict was arguably highly significant in the critical reappraisal of the use of political violence which preceded the PIRA cease-fires in particular. Rights discourse inevitably entails a process which could be described as ‘communicative sharing’, a dialogical exchange which entails the rational articulation of a position which not only renders it open to objective analysis but also inevitably entails an acknowledgement of the rights of the ‘other’ involved in such a dialogue. Highlighting attitudes of intolerance amongst employers or other key actors which inhibit the participation of former prisoners in social, civic and political life is important. That said, there is little national or international evidence that an approach to changing prejudicial attitudes which eschews actual legal protection and legislative equality in favour of ‘promoting tolerance’ is anything other than political window dressing. The former prisoner experience speaks directly to that reality.

Finally, we would argue that the ‘shared future approach’ and much of the community relations tradition in which it is firmly located appears locked into a world view that sees the breaking down of prejudice between the two principal traditions as synonymous with developing a ‘middle ground’ in Northern Ireland politics devoid of the ‘extremism’ of either side. In a context where Sinn Féin and the DUP appear to have triumphed over more moderate expressions of Irish Nationalism and Ulster Unionism, such a perspective would appear to encourage a politics of despair and nihilism.

It is our contention that self confessed ‘extremists’ amongst the former prisoner and former combatant communities have shown identifiable
leadership in transforming cultures of violence in Northern Ireland. It is precisely because of their ‘extreme’ pasts that they have had the credibility to demonstrate such leadership both within and between the communities which were most affected by the conflict. A key lesson which emerges from Northern Ireland is that the political generosity which is required for conflict transformation is to be within the political ‘extremes’.

As our research shows, former prisoner groups support services and modes of conflict transformation to a highly marginalised group in some of the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland. As well as offering counselling and welfare services, former prisoner groups are involved in:

- youth projects;
- not-for-profit social economy schemes;
- mobile phone networks;
- restorative justice;
- interventions that reduce and ameliorate interface conflict;
- inter-community projects promoting dialogue and peace-building among all sections of the community;
- lobbying government and statutory bodies in respect of political former prisoner issues;
- supporting the healing process and helping those who are victims of the conflict to come to terms with their losses;
- supporting community involvement, retraining and the development of skills among people who have been marginalised by society;
- encouraging self-help and user involvement in the provision of quality services for marginalised groups and people.

In sum, former prisoners have three specific roles to play in conflict transformation within and without their respective communities. In the first instance, they are involved in the restructuring of attitudes and the infrastructural reconstruction of those communities and the relationships between them. Secondly, they seek to influence policy for these areas but also policy as it reflects on former prisoners. Finally, they are more broadly
involved in the creation of community narratives linked to current political processes. This dimension includes human stories of ‘who we are and where we come from’ and the history of the conflict and its transformation. The key factor linking these activities, however, is the focus on the local; certainly, for both groups of former prisoners, national identity is important but there was a strong and shared sense that ‘higher politics’ had been – or were being – sorted out and that the real challenges facing them were those ‘on the ground’.

Conclusion

In pursuing these goals, former prisoners encounter exclusions and impediments, such as criminalisation. These factors impact on their capacity to deliver conflict transformation, as do salient differences between the two communities and the contrasting attitudes to former prisoners within each.

Arguably, however, the fixation upon criminality and other violent acts – if understandable – has subverted the public discourse regarding the positive role that former prisoners have played or might play in conflict transformation. Much of the public discourse appears to promote a notion of such groups as a cabal within which the realities of debate regarding an appropriate future and role in civic society is hidden. The argument on the role of former prisoners has generally focused on specific events, and in so doing does not place such events within a wider context of transitional politics. These evident difficulties, as outlined above, and the general presentation of them have denied alternative interpretations of such incidents. This does not mean that such difficulties are unimportant but they should be contextualised with regard to other positive positions and influences that have emanated from within former prisoner groups. It is possible to identify at least three overlapping styles of leadership by ex-combatants with regard to political transition and conflict transformation.

The idea of a ‘Shared Future’ is a state-led and elitist initiative towards a pluralist society that stems from a political process that, inadvertently, has concretised ethno-national allegiances. Critics argue that the privileging of universal group rights in the 1998 Agreement has resulted in attributes of individual identity such as culture, nationality and religion, which are understood to be matter of choice in pluralist societies, being reinforced as
determining public identifiers in Northern Ireland. As with the entire question of prisoner release and reintegration, the ideas embodied in the British and Irish governments’ commitment to a ‘Shared Future’ are part of an incremental, flawed, fragile and deeply contested process of transition and conflict transformation. Northern Ireland remains an arena of conflict not only between identities but between the formal and procedural processes of consociational democracy and the persistence of the interconnection of ethnicity, territoriality and political process. While the Belfast and St. Andrews Agreements reflect the consociational concern with the scale of the state, it is the failure to formulate ways of addressing the continued potency of these forces at the sub-state scale that, at present, undermines strategies for a ‘Shared Future’ which cannot be achieved through the endlessly repeated but ambiguous rhetoric of both British and Irish governments. The politically motivated former prisoners discussed here – both individuals and groups – are one resource in renegotiating a future society. It may not be a society that emulates the aspirations of the governments, but the capacity to help sponsor ideas of coexistence within and without the working-class areas that sustained, but also suffered grievously from the ‘war’, marks a significant progression in the everyday lives of those communities and their ultimate economic and social regeneration.

The effectiveness of former prisoner groups varies, as does their capacity to deliver on conflict transformation. It is worth citing at length the words of one very eminent member of Northern Ireland’s ‘civic society’, whose comments admirably sum up the ambiguities of the contribution of former prisoners to conflict transformation:

*I think it is important that their peace building efforts should be supported, and again it’s a question of ‘what is the return on that investment”? If the return on that investment is the integration into civil society permanently of people who [are] otherwise at risk of being sucked back into the maelstrom with all the expenditure involved in dealing with that situation, then I think that there is a worthwhile investment there to be made. It is part of the investment in the future and the view you take of it depends on the view you take of the importance of these people and their integration into normal society to the stability of Northern Ireland. I think it is highly important to stability. Probably the most powerful influences within the paramilitary and former paramilitary environment are the people who do want to move forward. There is bound to be an active internal debate and the best ambassadors for the future are people who are able to connect most easily with their colleagues and former colleagues who have been involved in struggle. Again they have got to be supported in doing that. I think government should support them in doing that.*
Notes

11. Interview, 08-02-2005.
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Building a New, Inclusive Society –
An Action Plan for the Trade Union Movement

Brian Gormally, City Bridges

The Research

The research was funded under Measure 2.1, Reconciliation for Sustainable Peace, of the European Union Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and was an action research study into community perceptions of the trade union movement. It involved focus groups and other methods of ascertaining the opinions of trade union and community activists about the operations and structures of the movement and its potential for contributing to the building of a new, inclusive society.

The following describes the basic structure and methodology of the project as agreed with the Community Relations Council:

Aim:
To assess how the Belfast Trade Union Council (BTUC) in particular and the wider trade union movement in general can best help build a peaceful and inclusive society.

Objectives:
To have explored perceptions of the composition, structures, activities, values and future role of the trade union movement;

To have identified any barriers to the full participation in the movement of, in particular, Protestants, Catholics, Nationalists, Unionists and women, and, in general, other potentially excluded groups of people;
To have agreed actions for the BTUC and proposals for the wider movement that will ensure equity, respect for diversity and recognition of interdependence within its structures and activities; and

To have agreed actions for the BTUC and proposals for the wider movement which outline a positive role in the broader community.

**The role of the project in building peace and the significance of the trade union movement**

The trade union movement has a proud history of combating sectarianism, working for employment equality and campaigning for democracy. Without rejecting either Nationalism or Unionism it has stressed the need for unity of working people and emphasised the common interests of its members. Though it has not sought a direct political expression, it has upheld the values of peace, democracy and solidarity within Northern Ireland, in the broader movements of which it is a part on the islands of Ireland and Britain and internationally.

The trade union movement is one of the institutions in society that brings together Protestants and Catholics in a shared enterprise. It has a direct entrée into the workplace and, at least in theory, a principle of solidarity that promotes common action for the common good. In its structure it can also be seen as a precursor of some of the North-South, East-West arrangements found to be necessary in the Agreement. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is an all-island body containing British-based, Irish-based and Northern Ireland-based unions, many affiliates also being members of the British Trade Union Congress. As a social movement bringing together hundreds of thousands of people, it therefore has great strategic significance in the enterprise of building a peaceful society.

However, there is considerable concern that the trade union movement is not living up to its potential in promoting reconciliation and helping build a new, inclusive society. The role of the movement during the conflict is contested. Some feel that it failed to confront the state when it abused human rights; others that its protests against violence, particularly in latter years, were one sided. Furthermore, there is a perception that trade unions, once seen as Protestant domains by many, have now become dominated by Catholics. The
existence of that perception was borne out by this research – it would need further research to establish to what extent it was accurate.

In these circumstances, those involved with City Bridges – a cross-border alliance originally established by the Belfast and Dublin Trades Councils and the Irish Trade Union Trust – decided to commission a frank examination of the movement in the North. The context was that they wished to chart a way forward that would build on the history of the trade union movement but adapt its structures and activities to make the most positive impact on building a new, inclusive society. In particular, they wished to explore the ways in which the trade union movement might assist in combating alienation and division in communities as well as in the workplace.

**Principles of the research**

This project took a firm, principled position on its approach to helping build a sustainable peace. This was not to be a platitudinous re-statement of aspirations, but an open-eyed examination of reality. The City Bridges committee agreed a number of guiding principles.

First, the trade union movement has, in principle, opposed sectarianism but could never have fully insulated itself from its effects. In the past, differential employment patterns and structural discrimination may have led to the perception that the trade unions were Protestant-dominated. Today, changes in employment patterns and the attempts to redress discrimination may give rise to the perception of a Catholic predominance amongst activists. However real or not these perceptions, it is right to examine and confront them as a first step.

Second, in attempting to confront sectarian and other divisions, it is entirely wrong for any person or institution to assume their immunity from them. This is why the research proposal was based on an examination of the structures and perceptions of the trade union movement itself. Nonetheless, City Bridges was convinced that the core elements of the culture of trade unionism have a role to play in the construction of an inclusive society. Aspects such as the principle of solidarity, developing a voluntary membership through persuasion, a culture of negotiation, a willingness to compromise, an emphasis on education and an active internationalism must
have a contribution to make to a new society. City Bridges wished to use the research to explore how these elements could be strengthened and how they could be made relevant to the wider community.

Third, City Bridges took as its overall approach towards combating sectarianism the interlinked principles of equity, diversity and interdependence. Its understanding of the applicability of these principles was as follows.

While the divisions in Northern Ireland have their particular history and characteristics, they cannot be overcome by ideas and actions generated only within the terms of the ideologies and opinions that have produced them. The linked concepts of Equity, Diversity and Interdependence (EDI) give a broader, generally applicable context to particular socio-political conflicts. Community divisions can be transcended by developing a common understanding of the principles of EDI and ensuring social structures and actions reflect them. This perspective sees the improvement of cross community relations as an outcome of the adoption and implementation of the EDI principles. These are:

A rigorous insistence on equity between individuals and between any identifiable social grouping;

The welcoming of diversity in order to stress the right to be different – to recognise that differentiation is a necessary part of social strength and as the antithesis to racism and sectarianism; and

Understanding interdependence means to know that the complexity and interconnectedness of the modern world make us finally dependent on each others’ goodwill, that no-one can oppress another and remain free and that granting equality and rights to others is a condition of experiencing them oneself.

The EDI approach to improving community relations is not about “reducing conflict” but proposes a positive and active commitment to principles that contradict discrimination and oppression of all kinds. Even though the main contemporary aim is to reduce sectarian conflict, the EDI approach tends to rule out a single-issue focus. Unless equity, diversity and
interdependence are applied for all categories, they will not work for one. It is necessary to contextualise, rather than dilute, the significance and characteristics of sectarian conflict.

It was therefore agreed that, in the research, though the concentration was on Protestant and Catholic perceptions and interactions, the necessary context would be provided by the exploration of the views of women and representatives of those in a number of groups in the equality categories. In fact, practical difficulties made it impossible to include a range of equality categories.

Finally, it was agreed that the approach taken should be based on action research. City Bridges was not particularly interested in a purely academic study but one that would produce proposals for action by the trade union movement. Hence it was decided that the basic output would be an Action Plan based on agreed plans for the Belfast Trades Council and proposals for the wider movement. Further, it was understood – and this understanding was strengthened as the process developed – that the research would itself amount to a form of action, raising awareness and debate throughout the movement.

**Separating for unity**

A distinctive feature of the research was the decision to identify four of the focus groups involved by perceived religion. The reason for this was so that a “culture of politeness” would not obscure frank discussion and that people would feel free to express their feelings, however unpopular they might be. For the same reason the project separated out the women’s groups and the one that was to be reflective of equality category groups. City Bridges was aware that this would be controversial within the movement – it is completely contrary to the normal practice of the movement – and it was explained in the following way:

“Some trade unionists may resent or oppose the convocation of focus groups based on perceived religious affiliation. Though City Bridges too believes that what unites people across the ‘religious divide’ is more important than what divides them, it believes that the fact of communal division cannot be ignored. There are two main ‘communities’ of people in Northern Ireland: they have different historical origins, traditions, cultural expressions and habits of mind. To suggest that the members of these ‘communities’, even those who are trade union activists, may have differing perceptions of the trade
union movement is hardly subsersive of solidarity. We suggest separating out these focus groups only in order that those whom they represent may be brought together in a unity based on clarity and understanding. The same goes, of course, for the groups based on gender and other signifiers of diversity.”

In fact, although there was some criticism of this approach, there was not the level of open hostility for which the project had been prepared.

**Process and results of the research**

It was envisaged that a formal organisational audit of the Belfast Trades Union Council, a formal partner in the project, would form the first part of the research. In the event, that was felt to be inappropriate for a group which is actually a loose network of trade union activists. Instead, a discussion document covering the challenges facing the Council and the trade union movement in general was prepared and circulated to delegates. Formal and informal feedback from that document contributed to the formulations in the Action Plan.

Six focus groups of trade union and community activists were held in September 2003. The feedback from each of those groups was then shared amongst them all in a second round of focus group discussions. A conference of focus group participants was held in November 2003 to discuss their joint experiences and findings. The three sessions dealt with Politics, Policies and Activities of Trade Unions, Community Relations within the Movement and Including or Excluding Women.

A summary of the issues raised was prepared as feedback to the movement as a whole and as an introduction to the draft Action Plan. This was as follows:

**Politics, Policies and Activities of Trade Unions**

- There is significant agreement that, while unions must concentrate first on workplace, industrial issues, they also have a broader social and political role.
- The “socialism” and radicalism of the trade union movement is seen as foreign and perhaps opposed to Unionism. There is hardly any reflection
of these political currents within Unionist politics. Trade unionism is seen as anti-state, which conflicts with Unionist political culture. The all-Ireland character of the ICTU is perceived as a barrier for Unionists.

- Unions have been paralysed on Northern Ireland constitutional or conflict-related issues or have had highly divisive debates. They have therefore become politically marginalised and can only act as a social pressure group.
- Some Protestant trade union activists see equality legislation and monitoring as destructive of the merit principle, discriminatory and wrong.
- There is a perception that politically motivated cliques dominate trade unions and manipulate issues for their own benefit.
- Both trade union and community activists find it difficult to see a positive role for trade unions within the community.

**Community Relations within the Movement**

There is a perception that Catholics are dominant in the ranks of trade union activists and officials, especially at ICTU level. This is seen as one-sided domination and presents a barrier to the inclusion of Protestants.

Catholics are seen as united and confident, Protestants as fragmented and fearful. This comes through in the trade union movement – the assumptions and prejudices of the outside communities’ impact on relations within the movement.

Divisive issues arise in the workplace, such as flags and emblems. There is a strong reluctance to discuss these issues at membership level. It is argued that the trade union leadership and management must come together and impose a neutral environment as workplace discipline.

Anti-sectarianism or awareness of diversity training is intermittent in the movement. There is no consistent discussion of issues of community division within the movement.
Excluding or including women

- There is an under-representation of women amongst trade union activists. This is a problem in itself but also because it makes it more difficult to recruit new women members.
- Though the unions have good theoretical policies on gender and many male activists are very good, there is also persistent prejudice and a macho culture in the movement.
- Some unions are dominated by political cliques that exclude women or use them as voting fodder in elections.
- Unions have good family friendly policies as regards employers but do not give their own employees the benefit. The methods of work and times of meetings are often not family friendly.
- There is a perception that what are perceived as “women’s” issues in the workplace are ghettoised and not pursued consistently and effectively.

It is hardly necessary to stress that all these issues have a clear relevance to the project of building sustainable peace in a new society in Northern Ireland. The next stage, however, was to win agreement for an Action Plan that would lay the basis for the progressing of that project by the trade union movement. A draft was prepared and widely circulated amongst the movement. A number of meetings were held with trade union leaders, including representatives of the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU.

A final conference was held on 20 March 2004. Invited as delegates were Trades Council Delegates and the chief regional officers of each Congress-affiliated trade union (or two designated representatives). As observers were invited focus group participants, Advisory Group members and members of the Congress Protestant Leadership Course, who had been due to meet at the same time and venue.

About 40 people attended the conference with excellent debate taking place. It was generally felt that the Action Plan would have a significant impact within the movement. A summary of the research and the text of the Action Plan, together with a list of relevant resources on the internet, were published and widely circulated (copies available from City Bridges).
The Afterword to the published Action Plan spelled out the relevance of the research project to promoting peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland:

The trade union movement is an expression of the impetus to solidarity in humanity – the urge to co-operate for the common good. As such it seeks to bring together all those who live by their work – and those who are unable to work – in their common interest and in the spirit of equality.

Yet we cannot deny the existence of a contrary, divisive dynamic in human experience – the pressure to compete for scarce resources, to turn inwards to the familiar when danger threatens, to stigmatise opponents and outsiders.

History has determined that the North of Ireland has suffered greatly from division. We live in a fiercely contested society that is struggling to put behind it thirty years of violent conflict. No institution, including the trade union movement, can claim to have avoided the effects of this division. This research has demonstrated some problems, but also shown a way forward.

A movement committed to solidarity still has to work to understand and overcome the divisions in its own ranks. It takes conscious, planned and consistent work to overcome division, whether based on religious/political labelling or – the oldest division of all – on gender. Moreover, the movement should never put itself in the position of demanding actions on equality and good relations that it is not prepared to take within its own structures and operations.

This Action Plan is not an attempt to tell the trade union movement what to do. It is an attempt to stimulate discussion in the clear conviction that the movement still has work to do in confronting and overcoming divisiveness. The trade union movement has the potential to be the foremost champion of equality, human rights and the welcome of diversity. To fulfil that potential will, however, take further commitment of time and resources to the struggle.

It is arguable that practical peace-building requires a network of people, organisations and processes that can make a lived reality of a new society. This research was part of a longer term proposition that trade union activists, and indeed their trade unions themselves, can be a significant and unique part of that network.

Influencing policy and practice

This research was never meant to be a dry academic exercise. It was explicitly designed to influence the policy and practice of the trade union movement. The Action Plan finally agreed amounted to a detailed agenda both for the Belfast Trade Union Council and the broader movement.
Action for the Belfast Trades Council

1. As proposed in the Discussion Paper for the Trades Council produced as part of this research, the Council should engage in a serious planning process, examining its purposes, whether it is still relevant, what its priorities are and what actions it can take to become more relevant. A strategic plan would contain any other agreed actions in this document.

2. The Council should activate its web-site on the NIC ICTU portal site and develop, either on that site or separately, an e-discussion facility. This would provide activists and interested parties with a forum for serious discussion of central issues way beyond what is available in formal meetings.

3. The Council should commit to the equality and human rights agendas both as necessary underpinnings to its core trade union role of fighting for rights and equality in the workplace and also as the basic ideological platform for its broader social and political role. In so doing, the Council should see it as one of its basic functions to make equality and human rights seem relevant to all union members.

4. The Council should also commit to becoming a focus of anti-sectarian thought and activity. Just as for the broader movement, this will necessitate a wide-ranging discussion, followed by clear decisions on its understanding of the nature of sectarianism and the appropriate stance and action for a trade union body.

5. In the light of the previous two proposals, the Council should re-evaluate its relationship with City Bridges, Counteract, the Equality Coalition [a grouping of NGOs jointly chaired by Unison and the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)], the Museum of Citizenship initiative and other similar organisations with which it has connections. It should examine what extra value in what particular roles its activities could bring.

6. The Council should commit to support for integrated education and explore the contribution it might make to it.
7. The Council should explore innovative ways of connecting its activities, discussions and networking to the community movement.

8. The Council should explore ways of obtaining continuous advice and engagement from relevant representative groups of Section 75 categories.

9. The Council should see one of its priorities as promoting working class culture in all its forms. Though such culture may often have been entangled with Orange or Green, there is an autonomous well-spring of culture derived from the experience of work and oppression which the trade union movement can promote.

10. The Council should consider the feasibility of conducting aggressive recruitment campaigns in shopping centres and other places where young people, especially young females, work.

11. The Council should consider developing and training a panel of speakers, preferably young, whose members would be prepared to go out to schools and talk about trade unionism in citizenship or civics classes.

12. The Council should critically examine its ways of working to assess the extent to which they may provide barriers to the participation of women.

13. The Council should explore ways of engaging with International Women’s Day to assist in making it a major promotional event in Belfast.

14. The Council should encourage a range of research and action-research initiatives on issues raised by this study. This might involve encouraging such initiatives by the ICTU or by individual unions, jointly commissioning work with associated organisations like City Bridges or Counteract, or seeking funding to directly commission research. Areas for study and development might include:

   - Innovative uses of information technology by trade union bodies;
   - Piloting a series of anti-sectarian discussion/training sessions for trade unionists;
   - Piloting a process of organisational audit and change suitable for trade union bodies designed to embed the principles of equity, diversity and interdependence in their policies and operations;
- Developing an education module on trade unions suitable for school civics classes;
- Action research on work-site based forums between employers, trade unions and local community representatives to discuss communal problems, especially in interface areas;
- Rigorous exploration of gender issues and barriers to participation of women in the trade union movement.

Recommendations for the broader trade union movement

1. The movement should work to produce a commonly agreed “vision” for anti-sectarian and “good relations” work. This might be a commissioned draft policy containing propositions on the definition of sectarianism, the goal of anti-sectarianism and the role of trade union bodies. This would build on the work begun in NICICTU’s response to the Shared Future document. The findings of this research would indicate that such a policy should include the understanding that every organisation in civil society, including trade unions, has a positive obligation to work through and confront the issues that arise from living and working in a deeply contested and divided society.

2. The movement should work to develop an agreed policy on the concept of a neutral work environment that also contains progression possibilities towards the effective management of diversity in the workplace. Such a policy might also include stages where neutrality is maintained on Protestant/Catholic indicators but diversity encouraged in other areas. This would involve the updating of the 1993 Agreement on Protection between the ICTU and the CBI as proposed in Congress’s response to the Shared Future document.

3. The movement should re-commit to its support for Counteract as the premier body pursuing anti-sectarian activity in the workplace. To implement the 2003 Congress motion supporting Counteract, Congress and affiliated unions might consider using the organisation to deliver training to their members and giving it financial support.
4. The movement should initiate further discussion on integrated education and attempt to develop a widely accepted policy amongst the membership in its support and subsequently in wider society.

5. The movement should undertake a co-ordinated education drive amongst its membership on equality and human rights issues.

6. Trade unions should consider monitoring their membership and recruitment patterns in terms of relevant Section 75 categories, including religion.

7. Trade unions should seek alliances with voluntary and community sector organisations around specific issues and campaigns. Joint education programmes might be considered as well as mutual invitations to policy discussion forums.

8. Trade unions should review their decision-making processes, particularly when it comes to difficult or divisive issues outside the industrial sphere. Attention might be paid more to the importance of winning the active support of large numbers of members to particular positions rather than achieving simple majorities at conferences or branch meetings.

9. Trade unions might consider a broader view of the criteria for membership, to include unemployed, retired and, possibly, the self-employed.

10. The results of this research imply a clear obligation on each trade union to review its operations and practices in terms of gender issues and the apparent continuing barriers to the participation of women in the movement.

11. The movement should critically review the terms and conditions of employment for trade union officials and the demands placed upon lay activists to ensure that they conform to the highest standards demanded of employers in terms of family friendly policies.

12. It is recommended that trade unions develop and engage in a planned programme of events including attendance at ALL party political conferences in these islands.
13. In meeting its commitment to building a peaceful and inclusive society
the trade union movement should develop a Political Leadership
Programme for trade union organisations in Northern Ireland.

14. The movement should support appropriate research and development
initiatives listed in the previous section.

   It would require a further research study to investigate the precise extent to
which the Action Plan has actually been implemented by the Belfast Trades
Union Council and the wider movement. The Trades Council has been more
actively involved in debate with the community and has made more alliances
with groups representing minority interests. As a voluntary grouping with no
separate funding, however, it does find it difficult to initiate particular
projects.

   Anecdotal evidence would tend to indicate that the wider movement has
paid more attention to equality and reconciliation issues. Within the last
couple of years the Northern Ireland Committee of Congress has established
Black and Minority and Lesbian and Gay Community committees, and its
equality work is led by its overall Equality and Human Rights Committee.
Congress is active in the Messines Project which is a reconciliation initiative
bringing people together in remembrance of those who died in the First World
War.

   City Bridges itself has carried on its role of stimulating anti-prejudice work
and peace-building in the trade union movement. Its initiatives include:

   • Guides and training materials on:
     Section 75
     Good Relations
     Disability in the workplace

   • Popular pamphlets on:
     EDI for trade unionists
     Peace-building
     Practising Solidarity
• The “Moving On” Project which consists of intensive training with cross-border, cross-community, multi-union groups of trade union activists covering the following topics:
  - Issues Without Borders – problems that unite us
  - Peace and Reconciliation – practical peace-building for trade unionists
  - Equality – core trade union business
  - Bullying and Harassment – attacks on solidarity
  - Disability in the workplace
  - The Fight against Poverty

This project also involves the establishment of sustainable cross-border networks of activists from different unions committed to pursuing the equality agenda through the democracy of the trade union movement.

**Recommendations for future reconciliation work**

The Action Plan in itself represented recommendations for the trade union movement. However, the principles that underlay it amounted to more general propositions about the role of trade unions in contributing to meeting the challenges of reconciliation work in Northern Ireland.

• **The importance, integrity and validity of the trade union experience.**

  This is a time of doubt and uncertainty for trade unionists. Some see a terminal decline in the movement; others, from inside and out, criticise its role over the past years of conflict. While it is clear that radical change is necessary, the Action Plan sought to emphasise that trade unions are an essential part both of the world of work and of wider civil society. Furthermore, there is a core set of beliefs and practices, derived from collective action, that have an enduring validity. It is not for the trade unions to drop aspects of these core beliefs because they may be unpopular, even within sections of their own membership, but to work more effectively for their acceptance.

  Politically and culturally, then, the trade union movement has its own identity. It is not incompatible with the range of views on the constitutional or national question, nor with different cultural strands in our society. It is, however, distinct and should be celebrated as such.
• The centrality of the pursuit of equality and human rights for trade unions.

All those who took part in the research agreed that the role of trade unions was to represent the rights, welfare and unity of working people, in the workplace itself and in wider society. This means that equality and human rights are core trade union business. We come together in trade unions so that our collective strength can match the employer’s, so that individual workers are not picked on or set against each other. This solidarity is impossible without equality. If some workers are privileged and others are discriminated against they cannot band together in a common interest. A collective approach therefore demands a total commitment to equality.

In a wider sense, discrimination and oppression destroy collective action, undermine faith in society and restrict economic output. Equality and justice promote social solidarity, practical support for the institutions of society and economic development. Though there may be discussion about the details of implementation, there should be no compromise on the importance of equality and human rights.

• The importance of diversity and good relations.

Equality does not mean pretending everyone is the same, with the same interests, skills and experience. Nor does it mean holding everyone back to the lowest common denominator. It actually means equality of opportunity – ensuring that everyone has the same opportunity to access public goods and services, to work and to progress in every aspect of their life. That requires an understanding of the diversity of identities and cultures in our society and an acceptance of the variety of their needs.

In turn, that requires a commitment to good relations, especially across the main, sectarian divide in our society. Prejudice exists where people ascribe a range of negative characteristics to a group of people simply because of an unrelated common denominator, in this case perceived religion. That such prejudice exists within the trade union movement is incontrovertible and demonstrated by this research. It is an imperative to acknowledge that openly and to work, in a united way, to overcome it.
• **Unions need to act on their own policies.**

  The research has shown a number of ways in which the actions of the trade union movement do not appear to match up to its theoretical policies. This is true of issues from anti-sectarianism to family friendly policies. The Action Plan is an attempt to redress this in appropriate areas.

  In more recent discussions within the movement, and particularly within City Bridges, there has been some discussion about developing this basic commitment to equality and reconciliation in the context of the concept of solidarity. This is a unique concept in that it combines elements of self-interest and altruism. The worker bonds with others for *mutual* protection. The condition of one being helped and protected is that they help and protect others. Trade unionism is therefore rooted in the lived experience of working people – including their individual desires for better standards of living – but also is capable of stretching out to be a motivating principle for general human co-operation. It is not an abstract call to charity, nor a narrow appeal to self-interest but an understanding that it is possible and necessary to combine individual and collective interests.

  There are also negative aspects to promoting the equality agenda and the process of reconciliation on a fragmented, issue by issue basis. The argument has to be won over and over again, depending on the particular aspect of equality and reconciliation involved. The trade union movement may therefore have an interest in developing a “solidarity strategy” involving a holistic approach to the promotion of equality and good relations.

  The trade union movement is the only institution in society that is both located in the world of work and has a basic value – solidarity – which is entirely appropriate to the promotion of equality and good relations. As such, it is in a pivotal position when it comes to meeting the challenges of reconciliation in the future. Trade union activists will be wishing to form strategic alliances with those agencies and organisations with an interest in this work to engage in mutually reinforcing practice. This research has provided a firm basis for those future discussions.
Practical Challenges to Reconciliation

While we can seek to understand reconciliation and encourage everyone to play their parts, there are practical challenges that societies coming out of conflict must face. In the case of Northern Ireland, two major challenges are how we live together and how we deal with the past. Jonny Byrne from the Institute for Conflict Research has investigated how shared or mixed residential communities function and what sustains them. While choosing where to live is a personal choice, the conflict in Northern Ireland has created extra challenges and strains on the housing market, and this issue must be addressed. Dealing with a contested and painful past presents its own challenges to reconciliation, and the chapter by Patricia Lundy of the University of Ulster and Mark McGovern of Edge Hill University explores what people in Northern Ireland perceive to be the most appropriate mechanisms for acknowledging and dealing with the past.
A Sustainable Peace?
Research as a Contribution to Peace Building in Northern Ireland
Shared Living: Mixed residential communities in Northern Ireland

Jonny Byrne, Institute for Conflict Research

In September 2006, the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) completed an eighteen-month qualitative examination of three mixed residential communities in Northern Ireland.¹ The primary aim of the research was to offer an analysis of the quality of life issues and the nature of social relationships that existed within mixed communities. This article examines the impact of this Peace II-funded research along three key themes: how the research contributed to the headline aims of the Peace II fund, how it influenced policy and practice so as to make a lasting contribution to improved community life and relations, and what conclusions were drawn within the context of the longer term challenges for reconciliation work in Northern Ireland. The article begins with a brief overview of the research along with a review of the key findings. Following on from this, the article will address each of the key themes under their respective headings.

Overview

Initially the research involved the data gathering, analysis and mapping of the mixed residential communities across Northern Ireland. Defining what constitutes a segregated or mixed area has in the past proven to be problematic, with a number of classifications used by various writers. Boal argued that a mixed area should contain more than 10% of residents from the minority community, while areas that were either 90% or more Protestant or 90% or more Catholic should be categorised as segregated.² The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has used this 10% minimum as their definition of segregation in previous publications.³
A number of official data sources were used, including Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) data and the 2001 Northern Ireland Census. Interviews and informal discussions were also conducted with residents and community workers from a number of perceived mixed communities to determine which would be most suitable for this research. After further deliberations three mixed residential areas were selected for analysis: the Ballynafeigh district of Belfast, the Areema estate on the edge of Lisburn, and Rathfriland, a rural town in County Down. The research explored the perceptions and understandings of residents and people working in the selected areas of what it meant to call their place ‘mixed’. It also explored the history that has helped to sustain a sense of sharing and mixing, and considered the current pressures that challenge that diversity.

The research involved qualitative and quantitative fieldwork in the three areas, including interviews and focus groups with a wide range of local residents, community workers, representatives from statutory bodies, and local politicians. In two of the study areas (Areema and Rathfriland) a short household survey/community audit was conducted to complement the interviews.

A number of themes emerged in the analysis of the three areas, and for the most part similar themes recurred throughout each of the areas. However, there were occasions when distinctive differences developed which could be attributed to rural/urban differences. These themes have provided us with a greater understanding of the social dynamics that exist within mixed areas, and what mechanisms could be put in place to both develop and sustain existing mixed communities. These included:

**Indicators of sharing** – a number of indicators were developed from the three areas that local residents used to determine that they resided in a mixed community. These included: an area having a cross-section of people from both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds; mixed relationships; a minimal number of sectarian incidents; an acceptance of cultural symbols; freedom of movement; an ability to express one’s culture; and a high degree of community participation and diversity.

**Changing demographics** – in recent years each of the three areas had seen a significant change in the demographic make up of the local populations. This
had implications on local relationships and levels of integration. There were concerns that substantial increases in the population of one particular section of the community could cause a ‘tipping’ effect and potentially result in a segregated community.

**Agents of integration** – there were a number of organisations and physical environments that existed within communities that facilitated integration. This was either a prominent community group or residents association that championed concerns of local residents and promoted the area both socially and economically. A number of environments were also identified as crucial for integration including leisure facilities, clubs/associations, shops and bars. It was also apparent that communities looked to people in authority within their areas for guidance and leadership. In some cases this leadership came from the local clergy who worked together and developed a close relationship by promoting acceptance and engagement.

**Community participation** – it was evident that within the three study areas there was a minority of local residents who participated in community led initiatives within their areas. These were usually people who had been involved since the establishment of their community groups. There was a degree of apathy from within the wider community to join these groups due to the level of personal time and resources required to participate. However, more importantly, the majority of residents acknowledged the work of the community groups and welcomed their contribution to the area as a whole.

**Age and integration** – There were clear differences in the perceptions of adults and young people in relation to their views of levels of integration within their communities. Often adults were more likely to perceive their community as mixed compared to young people, and whereas adults would feel that they had freedom of movement within their community, young people would more likely see invisible interfaces and lines of demarcation.

**Levels of integration** – In each of the areas there were various levels of integration, ranging from basic acknowledgements and greetings to socialising on a regular basis. There was consensus from older people that generally relationships were not as strong as in previous years. However, many felt that this was reflective of society in general, with contemporary lifestyles very much centred on the individual and not the community. It was evident that in
each of the areas people managed to live together in relative harmony. For many this was a suitable environment to reside in, but for others this was nothing more than co-existence with limited integration.

These themes provide an overview of the main findings that emerged from the research. They help to develop a picture of the various dynamics that exist within mixed communities. The following sections will attempt to explore these themes within the context of the guidelines set down by the Peace II fund.

**Contribution to the headline aims of Peace II**

The conflict and violence in Northern Ireland have left a profound legacy in the polarisation and segregation of the Catholic and Protestant communities and a highly divided society. The violence increased the levels of insecurity felt by people in many areas and resulted in limited contact between members of different communities. The increased sense of insecurity and limited contact in turn encouraged further geographical separation as people opted to stay in areas populated by ‘their own’. This has not only created a sense of safety and an increase in solidarity within each grouping, but also greater social distance and alienation from the ‘other’ and has resulted in a highly polarised society:

> Across the whole of Northern Ireland, 92.5% of all 100,000 public homes are segregated...Belfast city was always pretty bad, but this is the worst ever, and may be the worst in Western Europe. Polarisation is greater than it ever was – it’s a really tragic commentary on the state of the society.

This polarisation manifested itself in a variety of ways, including largely parallel systems and structures for education, housing, social life and sporting activities. The situation in Northern Ireland can best be described as one where the two groups live apart, with residential segregation the most visible and distinguishable form of segregation. The paramilitary ceasefires in 1994 did not put a brake on patterns of segregation, let alone begin to reverse them. Instead the violence associated with parades and interfaces led to an increase in communal tensions and levels of residential segregation, increased pressure on mixed residential areas and an increase in the number of interface barriers. The high levels of segregation and division have been acknowledged as
barriers to securing a real peace and the long term sustainability of a truly
democratic and prosperous society. At the same time the current divisions also
bring with them the possibility of further hostilities and violence as society
becomes more racially diverse.

This research has been one of the first examinations of mixed residential
communities in Northern Ireland, although Murtagh\(^7\) has also recently
published research on the topic. Most of the work of social geographers and
other academics\(^8\) has focused on the social pathology of division in Northern
Ireland and the dynamics of living apart, rather than looking at those
communities who are managing to live together. The focus on residential
segregation has meant that little interest has been previously paid to
understanding the how, where and why of mixed residential communities and
the fact that many people continue to express a preference for living in mixed
communities despite the long history of conflict and violence in Northern
Ireland.

One aspect of the research was to gain an understanding of mixed
communities by using the concept of social capital as a possible model for
thinking through issues of social division and the creation of greater levels of
integration.\(^9\) According to Putnam, social capital is defined as:

*Features of social life – networks, norms, and trust that enable participants to act
together more effectively to pursue shared objectives; social capital, in short, refers to
social connections and the attendant norms and trust.*\(^10\)

Social capital thus refers to the networks, contacts and social connections
that help create, sustain and develop a sense of community and common
interests at different levels. The three main generally accepted forms of social
capital are bonding (strong social ties between like individuals, e.g. family or
ethnic grouping), bridging (weaker, less dense, cross-cutting ties, e.g. friends)
and linking (refers to vertical rather than horizontal connections, e.g. political
elite and general public) capital.

As previously noted, part of the legacy of the conflict included segregated
housing and deep-rooted sectarianism. At present, 94% of social housing stock
throughout Northern Ireland is segregated. Within the Belfast area up to 97%
of housing stock is segregated\(^11\). Therefore, it is important to attempt to gain
an understanding of why certain communities in Northern Ireland remained
un-segregated throughout the worst of the troubles. As a result of segregated living, there was an assumption that levels of bonding social capital would be high within single identity groups. For the most part community background shaped people’s lives: where they could travel, work or socialise. The impact of this was that bonding social capital flourished due to an over reliance on people from the same community background as oneself. This was negated by a decline in bridging social capital as people often limited themselves to staying within the social and economic confines of their own community. This assumption of strong bonding social capital is true for segregated housing areas in Northern Ireland, but not for mixed areas.

The findings from the research indicated that there was a significant level of bridging social capital evident within each of the areas. The fact that people from different community backgrounds worked together to promote their communities, sat on management committees and generally lived in harmony together was evidence that, regardless of the conflict, bridging social capital was stronger in these types of mixed communities. These findings reflect the views of Putnam\textsuperscript{12}, who indicated that communities that have high levels of social capital benefit more than those which don’t. There is evidence that communities with a ‘good stock’ of social capital are more likely to benefit from lower crime figures, better health, higher educational achievement and better economic growth.\textsuperscript{13} In relation to the research and addressing the legacy of the conflict, it was apparent that mixed areas appeared to experience stronger levels of bonding and bridging social capital than segregated areas. Within each of the areas under analysis respondents highlighted the benefits they experienced from living within mixed communities, including: a strong sense of health and social well-being, freedom of movement, and an attractive area both socially and economically in which to reside.

It was difficult to determine why the mixed communities remained mixed throughout significant episodes and events of the conflict, while other areas became even more segregated. However, the work of Varshney\textsuperscript{14} may offer some support in gaining an understanding of how these areas maintained their diverse populations. Varshney highlighted the importance of engagement and of organised groups initiating interactions within a community. He established an integral link between the structure of civil society on one hand and ethnic or communal violence on the other. He examined the inter-communal networks of civic life that bring different communities together. These
consisted of Associational and Quotidian forms of civic engagement. The former incorporated business associations, reading and film clubs and trade unions. The latter referred to everyday forms of civic engagement such as routine interactions, basic dialogue, and informal/casual meetings. According to Varshney, both forms of engagement, if robust, promote peace; likewise their absence or weakness opens up the opportunity for communal violence.

It became evident that much of Varshney’s analysis could be applied to the research findings from the mixed residential areas in Northern Ireland. Varshney placed greater importance on the Associational forms of engagement because pre-existing organised local networks of civic engagement serving the economic, cultural and social needs of the community have the capacity to withstand incidents at a national level, which have the potential to develop in local communities and result in communal conflict. Within the three mixed areas, it is possible to conclude that the existing Associational forms of engagement, namely the housing associations, the local community development associations, the clubs, etc., provided the necessary structures to inadvertently offer stability to the community and created the environment where everyday forms of engagement could continue. Thus, these communities remained mixed whilst others, as a consequence of the conflict, became more segregated.

**Influence on policy and practice**

Issues around integration, sharing and mixed residential areas are important for a number of reasons. Recent policy documents, such as *People and Place* (the DSD Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy\(^{15}\)) and *A Shared Future\(^{16}\) (the consultation on community relations) address the need to identify ways that people can live together, while UK wide government policy also emphasises the importance of building ‘Community Cohesion’ as an underlying feature of society. It stands to reason that if we are to aim to create more mixed and cohesive communities then we need to know something about how such communities function at present.

Until recently our knowledge of mixed residential communities was somewhat sparse. To a large extent the nature of the conflict meant that it was easier to accept segregation and separation as the norm. It was simple to
distinguish between communities, and often easier to create two of everything rather than attempt to bring communities together. However, since the advent of the cease-fires and the peace process there has been a significant shift in communities’ and the government’s attitudes towards the concept of shared living. This came to prominance with the publication of *A Shared Future* (2005) that outlined how practical steps and actions could be co-ordinated across government and throughout civic society to ensure an effective and coherent response to division, with the aim of building relationships rooted in mutual recognition and trust.\(^{17}\) The document recognised the impact that the conflict had on society, and highlighted the importance of moving away from segregation. The costs of a divided society, whilst recognising, of course, the very real fears of people around safety and security considerations, are abundantly clear: segregated housing and education, security costs, less than efficient public service provision, and deeply rooted intolerance that has too often been used to justify violent sectarianism and racism.\(^{18}\)

The document also reinforced the importance of mixed residential communities, and identified that the way forward was by developing shared communities where people of all backgrounds can live, work, learn and play together; and by supporting and protecting existing areas where people of different backgrounds live together.

In recent years there has been a willingness that previously did not exist to create environments that can be accessed by both dominant communities in a safe and transparent manner. There is recognition that Northern Ireland is becoming a more diverse place, and subsequently there are moves from communities towards an acceptance of different cultures and backgrounds.

This research was published at a time when organisations such as the NIHE were striving to develop programmes that would facilitate the concept of shared living. As previously noted there had been a lack of knowledge or information pertaining to mixed residential communities in Northern Ireland. The findings from this research have provided statutory organisations and those in policy development with an insight into the complex dynamics that exist within these mixed communities. In 2005, the NIHE established a Community Cohesion Unit (CCU) with the particular responsibility of focusing on flags and sectional symbols, segregation/integration, race relations, interface areas and communities in transition. In relation to segregation the responsibility of the CCU is to:
• Support people who choose to live in single identity or mixed
  neighbourhoods;
• Analyse and assist in the sustainability of mixed estates;
• Facilitate and encourage mixed housing schemes in the social and
  affordable sector as far as this is practical, desirable and safe; and
• Work with the Department for Social Development, Housing Associations
  and others to bring proposals forward for two pilot projects of mixed
  housing schemes in the medium term.

In October 2006, the NIHE, in partnership with the Ulidia Housing
Association, opened the first housing project within Northern Ireland that was
developed in accordance with the principles of the government’s _A Shared
Future_ document.\(^{19}\) An advisory group was established, of which ICR was
part, to guide and support the implementation of the pilot scheme. One of the
preconditions of the group was that the community balance of residents would
not exceed 70% from either of the two main community groups. Although the
properties were allocated to applicants on the Common Waiting List in
accordance with the rules of the Northern Ireland Housing Selection Scheme,
it was apparent that the pilot scheme consisted of people from very different
community and cultural backgrounds. The resulting community, cultural and
religious makeup of the twenty families that moved into the housing estate
reflected in microcosm what the Secretary of State termed ‘the diversity of the
new Northern Ireland’\(^{20}\). A further aspect of the pilot scheme was the
development of a neighbourhood charter designed on the principles of _A
Shared Future_ and its vision of a peaceful, inclusive and fair society. It was
anticipated that residents would sign up to this charter on a voluntary basis.

The research conducted by ICR assisted in raising awareness around the
themes and issues associated with mixed residential communities in Northern
Ireland. The key findings were instrumental in highlighting to communities
and policy makers the driving factors that could facilitate integration and limit
segregation. This was especially significant in relation to the development of
the pilot housing schemes promoted by the NIHE and the CCU.

It should also be noted that there is evidence of existing housing areas
attempting to address segregation through the promotion of sharing. They
have bought into the concept of _A Shared Future_ and are using the principles
to design and implement programmes and initiatives that they hope will transform their neighbourhoods and communities. This research has stimulated discussions around what facilitates integration and sharing, and has assisted communities in putting in place mechanisms that may contribute to a more integrated community.

One such community that has recently taken the initiative and attempted to improve relationships through *A Shared Future* ethos is Springfarm near Antrim town. Currently the local Springfarm and District Community Association (SDCA), along with the support of the Community Relations Council and statutory organisations, have developed a Shared Neighbourhood Scheme. It is anticipated that this initiative will promote good community and race relations and deliver a shared vision for all the residents of Springfarm. The scheme will:

- Place the promotion of good community and race relations at the centre of policy, practice and delivery of public services;
- Establish greater clarity on the respective roles of all stakeholders;
- Underscore the need for all citizens, political parties, service deliverers, churches, etc. to play a role in promoting good relations in Springfarm;
- Put in place a clear framework for the approach;
- Promote joined up approaches to policy and funding by public sector bodies towards community and race relations in Springfarm;
- Seek to support staff in public authorities in their work to promote good community and race relations; and
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.

A further aspect of the initiative is that residents will be encouraged to develop a charter based on the principles of *A Shared Future*. This charter will recognise and promote an individual’s right to live in a positive environment cognisant of social, economic, health and physical needs. Residents will also sign up to the concept of promoting good relations through the notion of respect for self and others and respect for their community and environment. It should also be noted that the SDCA will work in partnership with the NIHE, the Racial Equality Unit and other organisations to ensure that existing and new residents are aware of the Shared Neighbourhood Scheme and encouraged to actively participate in it.
In the two years since the publication of *A Shared Future*, there has been a significant change in the language and terminology expressed by policy makers, statutory organisations and communities. There is a realisation that segregation is both socially and economically detrimental to society as a whole. A new impetus has been placed on the concepts of integration and sharing. The research conducted by ICR has focused attention on the realities associated with mixed residential communities at a time when there was a lack of awareness around the topic, yet a willingness to address the issue of segregated housing. ICR has contributed to the growing debate around the means of creating environments where the two dominant communities can both reside together and access the same facilities in an open, safe and transparent manner.

**Recommendations for reconciliation work**

The research generated a number of themes that highlighted the complex dynamics that exist within mixed residential communities. A number of recommendations were also developed to both offer support and guidance in the pursuit of creating mixed housing schemes and also stimulate discussion and debate on the idea of integration over segregation.

There is a strong view that for Northern Ireland as a whole to move forward there is a need for communities to reside together within the one environment. Reconciling the past is not achievable overnight, nor will it be an easy process. However, by developing areas where communities historically lived apart into places where they can reside together and access shared space is one method of delivering a peaceful and stable society. The research concluded that the development of shared living must incorporate the creation of shared space within the community. The research findings highlighted the importance residents of mixed areas placed on environments and structures within their community that could be accessed by everyone, regardless of community background. This created the space where people could meet and interact, foster and sustain relationships.

Although it is regarded as essential that communities from both sides of the divide begin to reside together, there needs to be a degree of caution applied. Ultimately, choice is the significant factor in determining whether people from different community backgrounds will live together. Therefore,
any future policies that relate to the concept of shared living should have at the fore elements of choice and opportunity. There is no doubt that the majority of people would want to live in a shared environment. However, this cannot be forced upon them. Furthermore, there have to be a number of shared housing schemes developed so that people have the opportunity to choose to live in one. The NIHE and specifically the CCU are involved in a number of initiatives that will both promote and offer people the chance to live in mixed housing areas. This is an important first step in creating an environment where mixed housing is no longer an aspiration but rather a reality. It will be interesting to note the impact of these schemes on both the residents and the wider community. It is also important to limit the expectations of these schemes, for, regardless of success or failure, lessons will be learnt which will provide further information on the realities of shared living.

Finally, the terminology around sharing and integration is vague. It is very difficult to aspire to something when people don’t actually know what they are trying to achieve. The research findings revealed that local residents perceived their communities as mixed, but were unable to determine why they were mixed. It was interesting to note that many residents found it difficult to define what was meant by ‘integration’ and ‘mixed’. Often questions were raised such as, what do you mean by mixed? How do you determine integration? How much integration was a success? Unfortunately, there are no coherent answers to these questions.

What is perceived as mixed in one area is maybe categorised as unbalanced in another. Society changes, and so do people’s expectations and perceptions of what constitutes shared living. Currently through much of government policy there is a strong emphasis on the concept of A Shared Future. To a large extent it underpins the direction that Northern Ireland is heading towards. However, people need to be clear about what is meant by A Shared Future, and more importantly acknowledge that it will not appeal to everyone. Crucially, the concept of developing and sustaining mixed residential communities relies upon the individual and the notion of choice.
Notes

1. Byrne, Hansson and Bell, 2006.
5. Belfast Telegraph 7/04/04.


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A Sustainable Peace?
Research as a Contribution to Peace Building in Northern Ireland
Attitudes towards a
Truth Commission for
Northern Ireland

Patricia Lundy, University of Ulster, Jordanstown,
and Mark McGovern, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk

Introduction: A Truth Commission for Northern Ireland?

This chapter will discuss the aims, outcomes and impact of research undertaken by the authors into attitudes towards whether or not Northern Ireland should have a truth commission as a means of aiding the process of positive post-conflict transition.¹ The research was carried out as part of the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILT) 2004.² We asked 1,800 people, a representative cross-section of Northern Irish society, a series of questions designed to find out if they thought a truth commission was a good or bad idea. We also wanted to know what their attitudes were towards the sort of aims, purpose, powers and structure a truth commission might have, were one to be created. This work followed on from earlier Peace II-funded research undertaken by the authors in 2004 and 2005 that critically evaluated community-based approaches to truth recovery by focussing on the work of one such initiative – the Ardoyne Commemoration Project.³

Truth Commissions: The International Context

The context of this research was twofold. First is the increasing importance placed upon truth commissions internationally as a mechanism for dealing with the past in violently divided societies that have a history of mass human rights violations and/or authoritarian rule. A truth commission can be defined as an official body ‘set up to investigate a past period of human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law’,⁴ and certainly such mechanisms have become one of the most common features of strategies of post-conflict transition. In the past three decades over thirty truth commissions
have taken place in various parts of the world, from Guatemala to South Africa, Chile to Nigeria. In the last five years alone, truth commissions have issued reports on longstanding conflicts and mass human rights violations in countries such as Morocco, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Peru, Timor Leste and Nigeria while truth commissions are currently ongoing in, for example, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. For Governments and international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Red Cross, truth commissions are increasingly seen as a primary means of developing post-conflict justice and instigating human rights-based post-conflict governments. This was recently evidenced in the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), presenting truth commissions as one of their ‘tool kits for post-conflict societies’.  

**Truth Commissions: The Northern Ireland Context**

The second important context (and in part a consequence of the first) was the emergence of a debate within Northern Ireland over whether such a truth recovery process would be beneficial here. The Good Friday Agreement and subsequent policy initiatives made provision for services to meet the needs of victims but focused little on justice issues or on the issue of a truth commission. Up until now the official position has been that, while some form of truth recovery process might have merit, the time is not yet ripe to open up areas seen as difficult and contentious. This was exemplified in the findings of a House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee’s inquiry into ‘Dealing with the Past in Northern Ireland’ in 2005. However, a wider debate about this issue has emerged within civil society and amongst a range of community groups and victims and human rights organisations. The issues involved in determining mechanisms for dealing with the past (for example, the Saville Inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday and allegations of systematic collusion) have often caused this debate to become heated, divisive and politically partisan. This was certainly true in terms of the positions adopted by various political parties. While by no means entirely the case, Nationalist and Republican parties have tended to be more in favour of some sort of truth recovery process, while Unionists and Loyalists have generally been far more sceptical and opposed. Other public voices have also been raised. The Chief Constable of the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI), Sir Hugh Orde, has argued in favour of creating a means to deal with the past,
and created an Historical Inquiries Team within the PSNI charged with investigating all unsolved conflict-related deaths. There have also been important initiatives within civil society, most notably in the work of Healing Through Remembering\textsuperscript{10} directed at engendering public debate, engagement with the issues and achieving an inclusive consensus on the way forward. Any progress in that direction has, however, been largely stymied by the political stalemate that ensued following the collapse of the power-sharing institutions in 2002. However, their re-establishment in May 2007 and the involvement in government of both the DUP and Sinn Féin mean that the debate on truth recovery mechanisms is likely to come more to the fore.

**Some Issues with Truth Commissions**

This raises a number of key questions, however, as to what any such process might look like and whether a truth commission makes sense for Northern Ireland today. Priscilla Hayner has suggested that truth commissions tend to have four key defining characteristics. They are: ‘past-focused’; concerned not with a specific event but patterns of human rights violations over time; existing for a pre-determined period of time and ending with a report of their findings; and, finally, because they are ‘officially sanctioned’, their ability to investigate and disseminate their findings is derived from that authority.\textsuperscript{11} In other ways, however, truth commissions can differ quite dramatically; for example, in terms of the extent of their powers to compel witnesses and evidence, the impact they have upon the future reform of state and other institutions, or their relationship to the formal judicial system. They can, in other words, differ quite significantly in what they are designed to do, how they go about doing it, who it is that carries out the work of the truth commission and what is done with its findings afterwards. It was essentially the perspectives on these sorts of issues that we wanted to investigate in order to help inform public debate and policymaking.

**The Findings of the Research: Attitudes towards a Truth Commission for Northern Ireland**

There were four main areas of attitudes towards a truth commission that the survey sought to investigate. First, is a truth commission important? Second, what were people’s aims, hopes and fears for a truth commission?
Third, what powers and structures would people prefer a truth commission to have, if one were to be created? And finally, how did they feel about other ways of dealing with the past? We were also primarily interested in analysing these attitudes in terms of self-declared political and religious affiliation. The main findings are summarised below.

Is a Truth Commission Important?

For the purposes of the survey a truth commission was defined as ‘an inquiry where everyone would have to tell the truth about things to do with the ‘Troubles’. When asked whether they thought a truth commission was important or very important for the future of Northern Ireland more people agreed that it was important (50%) than disagreed (28%) (Table 1). This was also true when the figures were broken down both by religious affiliation and support for the North’s main political parties, though with some significant differences. Catholics were a little more likely to state that a truth commission was either important or very important for the future (59%) than those of ‘No Religion’ (55%) and more again than Protestants (43%), although even in the latter case this represented more people than those who disagreed (33%).

In terms of political parties a majority of Alliance (59%) Sinn Féin (57.9%) and SDLP (57.4%) supporters expressed approval for a truth commission. This support fell amongst UUP (44%) and DUP (41.5%) voters, although in each case again more stated a truth commission was important than not (33.8% and 37.1% respectively).

Opinion is therefore quite divided on the idea of a truth commission for Northern Ireland. There would appear to be a body of support for such an inquiry, though more so amongst Nationalists than Unionists and not constituting an overall majority. However, this also needs to be set against other responses. For example, while ‘getting to the truth’ was seen as the most important single aim for a truth commission, 83% felt that such a mechanism ‘would not necessarily get the truth’ and 81% felt there were more important things to spend money on. Indeed 65% also agreed that there were better ways to deal with the past than a truth commission.
Table 1: Is a truth commission important or unimportant for the future of Northern Ireland?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly important</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly unimportant</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unimportant</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were some other differences in terms of religious and political affiliation. Generally, Catholics were somewhat more likely to feel that a truth commission could make a positive contribution, for example, in helping to ‘clear the air about the conflict’ (50%) than Protestants (35%). However, there was a significant degree of shared scepticism that a truth commission could give Northern Ireland a ‘clean start’ or make it a ‘more peaceful and less divided society’. It would appear therefore that a large number of people might like to find out the truth about the past, but they may not regard it as a key priority, nor are they convinced that a truth commission is the best way of achieving this.

Perhaps, surprisingly, given the public debate on truth recovery, only 23% of people had heard of a truth commission having taken place elsewhere. This may also mean that the description provided in the survey (as an inquiry ‘where people would have to tell the truth’) had a significant impact on people’s responses.

Aims, Hopes and Fears

If there was limited enthusiasm for a truth commission it may in part be a result of fears that people have about delving into the past and a sense of pessimism about politics in general. What is also apparent is that, while in the main there is a large degree of agreement on what the aims of a truth commission should be (or indeed any past-focused process), there are also
some important differences as to what should be the result of ‘getting to the truth’. This was most obvious in terms of whether or not a key aim of a truth commission should be that it would lead to the ‘punishment of people who had committed criminal offences’ (Table 2). While this was the first preferred aim of only 9% of respondents (compared, for example, to 30% who chose ‘to get at the truth’, 16% ‘to allow a line be drawn under the past’ and 13% ‘to allow communities become reconciled’), this was more popular amongst Unionists and supporters of the DUP (20%) in particular. On the other hand, there was little support (3%) for the idea that a truth commission would ‘find out if institutions abused their power’ except amongst Sinn Féin voters (10%), though even here this was far less popular an option than ‘to get at the truth’ (30%) and ‘to draw a line under the past’ (18%). There were some notable differences too on the idea that a truth commission should ‘help communities become reconciled’, with this a far more favoured response for Alliance (22%) and SDLP (17%) voters than those of the UUP (13%), DUP (11%) and Sinn Féin (9%).

Table 2: Preferred aim of a truth commission by % of total and party political supporters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim of truth commission</th>
<th>% Total</th>
<th>% UUP</th>
<th>% DUP</th>
<th>% Alliance</th>
<th>% SDLP</th>
<th>% SF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To get at the truth</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To punish people who committed criminal offences</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get compensation for victims</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To allow a line to be drawn under the past</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help communities get reconciled</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As an opportunity for people to tell their stories</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To find out if institutions abused their power</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get healing and closure</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get the story straight about the conflict</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This pattern was generally repeated when the hopes and fears people had for a truth commission were explored. So, for example, while ‘promoting peace and reconciliation’ (61%), ‘uncovering the truth’ (50%) and getting ‘healing for victims’ (41%) were the most popular answers, a significant number also hoped that it might ‘clean up any institutions shown to be corrupt’ (38%) and get ‘criminal convictions’ (37%). However, Nationalists (and particularly Sinn Féin supporters) were more inclined to support the former while, in the latter case, supporters of the DUP (51%) were significantly more likely to hope for criminal convictions than those of the UUP (38%), Sinn Féin (32%) and the SDLP (28%).

As far as fears were concerned people were clearly concerned that a truth commission might re-ignite issues from the conflict by ‘causing more damage than good’ (45%), ‘creating greater tension’ (48%), or could possibly ‘start people fighting again’ (42%). The most widely expressed fear was that it would be ‘a waste of money’ (52%). In the latter case supporters of both the UUP (60%) and DUP (62%) were far more likely to express this fear than those of the SDLP (27%) and Sinn Féin (25%).

Powers and Structure

A sense of distrust and pessimism regarding virtually all locally based political groups and bodies was evident when people were asked who they might trust to run a truth commission. While it was not possible to ask people what combination of organisations they might wish to see in charge, roughly 90% of respondents stated that they would not trust any of groups mentioned (including, amongst others, the British and Irish Governments, the Northern Ireland Assembly, victims groups, judges and the churches). The only bodies to elicit a significant degree of support were ‘international organisations, such as the UN’, whom 47% of people said they would trust to run a truth commission. Alliance (67%), SDLP (64%) and Sinn Féin (60%) supporters were significantly more likely than those of the UUP (45%) and DUP (36%) to view this internationalising of truth-telling in a positive light.

There was significant agreement that if a truth commission was created it should not have the power to grant amnesties for past wrongdoing to those giving testimony. Only 19% of people felt that amnesty powers (which have
been a feature of other truth commissions) were a good idea while 60% were against it (including 1 in 3 who expressed this view strongly). There were significant differences in views according to religious affiliation. A third of Catholics (33%) supported the idea of amnesties (though only 8% strongly) with around half of Catholics (48%) against it. On the other hand a mere 10% of Protestants were for the idea of amnesties, while 70% were against it (including 40% who said so strongly).

There were overwhelming majorities in favour of the idea that if a truth commission was set up it should: be held in public (82%), travel around to talk to people (83%), have the power to compel people to appear (77%) and be chosen by ordinary people (76%). The importance of impartiality and independence was also emphasised by the fact that 87% thought that any truth commission should be ‘an outside body independent from anyone involved in the conflict’.

Other Ways of Dealing with the Past

Truth commissions are not the only way in which a society emerging from conflict might attempt to come to terms with its past. There are a number of other options, many of which proved to be more popular than the idea of a truth commission (table 3). Of these, ‘support for victims’ (88%) and ‘initiatives within communities’ (85%) were particularly favoured and enjoyed high levels of cross-community support. Also popular were a ‘story-telling’ process (69%), more police investigations (66%) and ‘public apologies’ (60%). Less favoured were ‘more compensation’ (51%), ‘memorials or centres of remembrance’ (43%) and ‘more public inquiries’ (42%). There tended to be a large degree of agreement on many of these options when looked at in terms of religious and party political affiliation, although there was a clear divergence of views on the question of ‘more public inquiries’. A total of 56% of Catholics were in favour of further public inquiries, including 28% strongly so, 46% of those of ‘No Religion’ supported this option while only 32% of Protestants felt the same. A total of 72% of Sinn Fein supporters thought more public inquiries were either very or fairly important for the future, while the figures for those supporting the other main political parties were SDLP (50%), Alliance (41%), DUP (35%) and UUP (26%). Attitudes to previous or ongoing public inquiries would seem to have an important impact here.
Table 3: Attitudes towards other ways than a truth commission to deal with the past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>very important</th>
<th>fairly important</th>
<th>neither</th>
<th>fairly unimportant</th>
<th>Very unimportant</th>
<th>don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More public inquiries</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public apologies</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More police investigations</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story-telling process</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorials &amp; centres</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for victims</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More compensation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community initiatives</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey therefore revealed a mixed picture on attitudes towards the idea of a truth commission for Northern Ireland. Around half of those asked thought such a process could be important for the future, although not necessarily seeing it as a key priority and having some doubts as to whether or not it could get to the truth. Nationalists were more inclined toward truth recovery than Unionists, while amongst the latter in particular there was a significant constituency for whom the truth about the conflict would be better sought through investigations leading to prosecutions and punishment. If a truth commission were to be set up in Northern Ireland there is a large group of people for whom its independence, impartiality and (for Nationalists at least) an international dimension would be important for its success. However, a truth commission did not enjoy as much support as a number of other possible ways of dealing with the past, most obviously in terms of providing support for victims and undertaking grassroots initiatives within communities.

The Research and the Peace II Objectives

We will now address three aspects of the outcomes and impact of the research and how they relate to the key objectives of the Peace II Programme. First, how has the research informed an understanding of what contribution a truth recovery process might make to addressing the legacy of the past and
building a sustainable peace? Second, how have the findings of the research impacted on the debate over policy in this area? And third, what lessons can be learnt from the research in shaping up for the longer term challenges of reconciliation work in Northern Ireland?

**Addressing the Legacy of Conflict**

The research undertaken as part of the Peace II Programme was specifically designed and funded to explore what possibilities existed, or might be created, to promote reconciliation for sustainable peace and to address the legacy of the conflict. Truth commissions, or indeed any other form of truth recovery mechanism, are specifically intended to address the legacy of conflict. Despite the various ways they may differ in terms of remit, powers, structure and outcome, addressing human rights violations and the direct experience and consequences of conflict and violence are clearly central to the concerns of any past-focused process.

The aim of the research was therefore to assess whether or not prevailing attitudes toward a truth commission in Northern Ireland meant that such a mechanism might make a positive contribution to achieving a sustainable peace. It similarly sought to identify those areas where there was evidence of consensus, and, where there was not, what factors may be at work to explain a divergence of opinion. The research was also designed to identify what work might have to be undertaken to create conditions for truth recovery mechanisms, if they were introduced, which would be likely to promote reconciliation.

The picture that emerged from the research was complex and varied. One of the key findings was the apparent lack of awareness of other truth commissions that have been held elsewhere in the world. This would suggest that people might generally be unfamiliar with the potential, and the problems, that such a mechanism might entail for addressing the legacy of the past. There was also clearly a great deal of scepticism about the capacity of such a process to get to the truth, and some grave concerns as to whether a truth commission would aid community relations or, rather, exacerbate tensions. Indeed, a general sense of distrust and scepticism was one of the abiding patterns that emerged from the research.
On the other hand, there was plenty of evidence to suggest that, while people’s *expectations* of a truth recovery mechanism were somewhat limited, many nevertheless *hoped* that such a process could deal with the legacy of the conflict. Similarly, many people clearly believed that, whether through a truth commission or by some other means, dealing with the past was something that needed to be done, even if they were less than enthusiastic about its chances of success.

One potentially positive outcome of the apparent scepticism pervading many people’s responses was a widely held view that transparency and impartiality should be central to the workings of any truth commission. These values and principles, here regarded as key to the ways in which to address the legacy of conflict, might also be seen as cornerstones of a post-conflict rights-based regime that could sustain peace into the future. There are some clear implications here not only for developing means to deal with outstanding justice issues, but also the need to embed structures and a culture of accountability to counter impunity within key state institutions, such as policing.

The particular circumstances of violently divided societies, where long term communal division has been an important contributing factor in the causes of conflict, also place an emphasis upon the need to identify variations in aims and expectations for truth recovery processes. One of the fears often associated with such mechanisms is that it becomes a means of imposing ‘victor’s justice’, or that it will serve the interests of one group rather than another. Clearly, there were some points of divergence amongst respondents, and the sense that a truth commission might serve a ‘Republican agenda’ was a concern more regularly expressed by a significant number of Unionists and/or Protestants than Nationalists and/or Catholics. Nationalists and Catholics were also significantly more likely to view truth processes favourably, while a more retributive attitude towards the potential outcomes of dealing with the past was (as we noted above) a more common feature of Unionist (particularly DUP) and/or Protestant respondents.

That said, there was also a great deal of common ground and points of convergence across traditional political and community lines on how and in what ways a truth commission might or might not deal with the legacy of the conflict. In general terms, while Unionist reluctance and Nationalist support
for a truth commission was noticeable, this was not as accentuated a divide as might often have been assumed, suggesting the potential of common ground that might be important for the future.

Policy and Community Relations

The research was designed to feed into the wider policy debate on ways to deal with the past and how this might impact upon community relations. It also sought to provide quantitative data and evidence of attitudes towards truth commissions as a basis upon which policy initiatives in this area might be developed.

As was noted above, official policy in relation to the ‘victims’ agenda’ has tended to focus upon service provision. This has been paralleled by a tendency to try and avoid post-conflict justice issues and truth recovery processes because of an expressed concern that they might exacerbate division and difference. This was the view that underpinned the conclusion of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee that, while ‘supportive of the idea… [of] a formal truth recovery process’ the lack of ‘community consensus’ and ‘confidence’ meant they could not recommend such a process at that time.12 Similarly, within party political debates on truth recovery, community divisions have tended to appear as stark and unmoving. It was seen as important to see if this was the case, and, even if so at the level of political leadership, whether such patterns were replicated amongst the public as a whole.

The research provided and analysed information on how various sections of society comprehend such key concepts as ‘truth’, ‘justice’, ‘healing’ and ‘reconciliation’, and to explore the implications this has for past-focused policy initiatives. The NILT survey allows for the examination of the data by a range of variables (for example, age and gender). However, our analysis concentrated on those of self-declared religious affiliation and party political support precisely to provide information that would address the questions and concerns expressed by policymakers. We also sought to cross-reference the findings in relation to both of these variables to ensure that as full a picture as possible could emerge. As we have argued, while the research found that there was clear evidence of divisions along traditional community and political lines
(particularly in certain areas), the picture that emerges is also more complex than may have often been assumed. This in itself represents an important finding upon which policy in this area might be based. The apparent polarisation of attitudes amongst political representatives may follow the general contours of more widespread attitudes, but in the latter context they may not be as stark as the tenor of the political debate would often tend to suggest.

The findings of the survey have already helped to inform civil society discussion and initiatives. The findings were presented to the ‘truth and acknowledgement’ sub-group of Healing Through Remembering (HTR), of which one of the authors was a member. Along with the earlier research into the efficacy of community-based projects, this helped shape the discussions leading to the recent publication by HTR of a series of five possible models for a truth recovery process for Northern Ireland.

The report was launched in November 2006 before an audience of policymakers, practitioners and academics, and was also distributed amongst a wide range of both statutory and non-governmental groups and bodies. As well as various victims and human rights groups this included representatives of the government agencies responsible for the development of policy with regard to victims; most obviously the Victims Unit of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM).

The re-establishment of the power-sharing institutions in May 2007 may have created the sort of social and political space which previously has been felt to be lacking for developing some form of mechanism to deal with the past. It is therefore highly likely that the evidence from this survey will become increasingly important as a basis for forming policy in this area. Another potential policy application of the data will be its use, if a truth commission or formal truth recovery process is created, to compare attitudes before and after its operation, therefore allowing for a study of the impact that such a process can actually have. This application may prove to be significant not only within Northern Ireland, but more widely for those involved in assessing the efficacy of truth-telling mechanisms in engendering sustainable peace and reconciliation.
The Challenges for Reconciliation Work

It is clear from the research findings that the attitudes expressed both toward the idea of a truth commission in particular and the legacy of the conflict more generally continue to offer a series of challenges for those engaged in reconciliation work. Chief amongst these perhaps are ongoing issues of trust and distrust.

As our previous Peace II research indicated, distrust is an important factor influencing not only relations between communities, but also within them and in their relations with state and social institutions. An ongoing distrust of the aims, intentions and perspectives of other communities and of key social and political institutions was also very much in evidence in attitudes towards a truth commission for Northern Ireland. For example, the view held by many Unionists and/or Protestants that a truth commission would be used to undermine existing institutions can be set alongside clear evidence of ongoing distrust in those very institutions amongst many Nationalists and/or Catholics. In similar vein, the almost universally held view that no group, body or institution within Northern Ireland could be trusted to run a truth commission was paralleled by a belief (again held by the overwhelming majority) that they should also be answerable to such a process. Truth recovery processes are themselves designed to contribute to the work of embedding social trust within and between communities, as well as enhancing a rights-based framework of accountability and transparency for the work of key societal institutions. However, precisely what role a truth commission might play (if any) in dealing with the challenges of reconciliation work, how it might be employed to help identify best practices in the development of strategies for dealing with victims and survivors, and how best to collate and disseminate knowledge of what a truth commission might involve are all issues that may need to be explored and considered further.

As the research also evidenced, there are clearly challenges as far as levels of knowledge, fears and the expectations that people hold out for truth recovery. Paramount here is that over-riding figure of over 85% of people who did not feel that a truth commission would necessarily get to the truth. This may also be closely linked to issues around what is often identified as key to the work of a truth recovery process: the construction of a shared narrative of the past conflict. Alongside the practical social and economic issues with
which a post-conflict society has to deal, specific histories and memories of
the conflict can help fuel future division and violence. Whatever approach to
dealing with the past is implemented, one of its key goals is likely to be to
promote this changed relationship to the memory of the past.

In this regard, however, one of the most positive findings of the survey
(particularly for those involved in grassroots reconciliation work) was the very
high number of people who supported the idea of community-based initiatives
as means to help people come to terms with the past. Over 85% of those
interviewed in the survey felt that this was either important or very important.
This option was only exceeded by ‘support for victims’ as a popular
alternative to a truth commission as a way of dealing with the past. Quite what
form such ‘initiatives within communities’ might take was less clear from the
answers given. However, when taken alongside other responses this does
suggest that there is a high level of consensus that community-orientated
approaches might be one means of circumventing the potential of political
divisiveness and distrust that people identified with more formal processes.
Notes

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A Sustainable Peace?
Research as a Contribution to Peace Building in Northern Ireland
Local Issues

Local communities in Northern Ireland that have experienced high levels of violence need support as they seek to deal with the past. Coming out of a conflict leaves a legacy, and violence has far-reaching impacts. Research that explores how particular communities have dealt with and are dealing with such issues can be both cathartic for participating communities and instructive for other areas and groups. Jonny Byrne from the Institute for Conflict Research investigates the violence in East Belfast in 2002 and seeks to address the impacts of these experiences on local people and the structures that were put in place to prevent future conflict. An evaluation of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project by Patricia Lundy of the University of Ulster and Mark McGovern of Edge Hill University explores the impact of a localised truth recovery process in an area that has experienced a high level of conflict-related violence. Both pieces of work, whilst dealing with localised situations, can provide insights for other communities that have experienced violence.
A Sustainable Peace?
Research as a Contribution to Peace Building in Northern Ireland
Interface Violence in East Belfast during 2002: the impact on residents of Short Strand and Inner East Belfast

Jonny Byrne, Institute for Conflict Research

This article examines the impact of a Peace II funded research project conducted by the Institute for Conflict Research in 2005. The research focused on the legacy of violence and disorder in the interface and neighbouring communities of Short Strand and Inner East Belfast during 2002. The article is presented in three distinct sections in an attempt to address the key themes associated with the Peace II fund: how the research contributed to the headline aims of the Peace II fund, how it influenced policy and practice so as to make a lasting contribution to improved community life and relations, and what conclusions were drawn within the context of the longer term challenges for reconciliation work in Northern Ireland. The article will firstly provide an overview of the research, attempting to contextualise the events that occurred and document the key findings. Following on from this, the article will address each of the key themes under their respective headings.

Overview

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s there was a dramatic upsurge in the levels of violence between Nationalists and Unionists in areas where these communities existed side by side. The areas where these violent sectarian confrontations took place have often been labelled as interfaces:

An interface is a common boundary line between a predominantly Protestant/Unionist area and a predominantly Catholic/Nationalist area. An interface community is a community which lives alongside an interface.¹

There are strong similarities in the areas where interface violence occurs. There are usually high levels of social deprivation, high unemployment, and
low educational attainment, and interfaces are usually located in urban developments. However, attributing a universal cause for the violence has proved difficult, and subsequently developing a consistent approach to preventing interface violence has been problematic.

One such area that suffered significantly from prolonged interface violence was the Nationalist and Unionist communities of Short Strand and Inner East Belfast during 2002. ICR was contacted by community workers from Nationalist and Unionist communities affected by the interface violence and asked to document and highlight the impact that the events of 2002 had on the local residents. The research funded under the Peace II Programme was conducted over nine months from January to September 2005, and involved a number of interviews and focus group discussions with community workers and representatives, statutory and voluntary organisations, political representatives and individuals and families who lived on the interface. The research focused on people’s experiences and knowledge of the interface violence that impacted on the Short Strand and Inner East communities during 2002.

The central aims of the research included: the documentation of local residents’ and community workers’ perceptions as to why the interface violence erupted so ferociously in 2002; a recording of the impact of the violence on the lives of adults and children living in the area and on the wider community interests in East Belfast; and a development of the reasons attributed for the limited violence in the area since 2002.

**Interface violence**

From early 2002 there was persistent and recurrent violence in the interface areas of East Belfast around the Short Strand. The fact that the violence had erupted so quickly and continued at an intense level for several months surprised many commentators. Up until 2002 the interfaces in East Belfast had been relatively stable, and the majority Protestant/Unionist community had lived in relative calm beside the minority Catholic/Nationalist Short Strand community. Since the cease-fires community representatives from both sides had worked tirelessly to monitor and control behaviour along
existing interfaces. They had created a Mobile Phone Network and had participated in discussions about issues that impacted on both their communities. In comparison to the rest of Belfast, the interfaces around the Short Strand were known for their lack of disorder and for the close working relationships between community representatives.

In May 2002, an apparently random, isolated incident materialised into a prolonged, violent confrontation between neighbouring Nationalist and Unionist communities that only reduced in intensity eight months later. The research was unable to clarify who was responsible for initiating the violence. Both communities strenuously defended their own actions and attributed blame to the ‘other’ community. There was, however, a consensus that existing safety measures had failed to alert key people and were unable to prevent the violence that engulfed both areas.

The violence and disorder began in Madrid Street but quickly spread to other parts of the area, encompassing large sections of the Unionist and Nationalist communities. This was vividly depicted by the very public images of large scale communal violence, riots and disorder. Incidents of pipe, petrol and blast bombs along with victims of shootings and people displaced from their homes were common occurrences throughout the year. Streets such as Clandeboye Gardens in Short Strand and Cluan Place on the other side of the peace line became synonymous with nightly violence and running battles with the police.

The majority of interviewees were surprised that Cluan Place and Clandeboye Gardens became the focal point for much of the violence and disorder. Prior to 2002 local residents previously associated them with places ‘that nothing ever happened in’. However, this area was identified by the majority of respondents as encompassing the worst and the most destructive of the violence and disorder. Two videos, one released by the Inner East Forum ‘Cluan Place: The Terror and the Truth’ and the other by the Short Strand Community Forum ‘The Siege of Short Strand’, depict in graphic detail the extent and ferocity of the violence experienced by communities living directly on the interface. The videos, although clearly one sided in their portrayal of the violence, provide the viewer with a sense of the anger, hurt, desperation and isolation experienced by residents from both communities.
There was a dramatic change in the level of disorder at the beginning of June 2002. Five people from the Protestant community were shot in and around Cluan Place. According to many interviewees the victims were either assisting people to leave Cluan Place and surrounding areas or helping to board up the windows of some of the recently uninhabited properties. They were also adamant that the shots were fired from within the Short Strand. These shooting incidents sent shock waves through the Protestant/Unionist community in East Belfast. There was a sense of real desperation, with many looking towards Loyalist paramilitaries for retribution. The research findings reported that both communities expected a strong military response from the Loyalist groups, but this was not the case.

However, by the end of 2002 there was a significant decrease in levels of violence and disorder along the interfaces. The violence did not simply stop, instead it became more sporadic, isolated and less violent. There was a gradual decline in incidents and violent exchanges between people from the two communities. The research concluded that there were a number of explanations for the decline in violence, but no definitive or specific explanation. These ranged from an increase in security measures to the influence of community and political representatives. It appeared that people living along the interfaces grew tired and despondent and that the main protagonists in the violence did not reside directly on the interfaces. It could be interpreted that those individuals most affected by the violence had decided enough was enough, reclaimed their community and created the environment where discussions could take place to resolve the conflict. Since 2002 there have been a number of programmes and initiatives developed within the two communities that have enhanced confidence and eased tensions along the interfaces. These lessons will be discussed in more detail throughout the article.

**Addressing the legacy of the conflict**

The research focused on the legacy of the violence and disorder of 2002 in the interface and neighbouring areas of Short Strand and Inner East Belfast. Interface violence has always existed within the context of the Northern Ireland ‘Troubles’ from the late 1960s. However it really came to the fore
during the onset of the peace process in 1994. Recent research has examined violence and disorder in North Belfast and indicated that no single cause could be attributed to the high profile sectarian disturbances that had been synonymous with the area since the cease-fires in 1994. Instead, a number of individual factors, when combined together, provided the catalyst for violent confrontations between the Nationalist and Unionist communities, including: ‘parades, territory, segregation, power, young people, policing, the peace process and ambiguity’. These were viewed as significant factors in developing and sustaining the interface violence.

Subsequently, developing a generic solution to addressing interface violence has had limited success, with the majority of approaches simply attempting to manage the disorder. A number of community-based initiatives and programmes based on principles of intervention and prevention have been created in the hope that violence along the interfaces throughout Northern Ireland can be curtailed. The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) has increased the number of barriers and peace walls, and the PSNI has increased the levels of CCTV coverage across interfaces.

Furthermore, a number of educational and interventional programmes have been developed to restrict the number of young people frequenting interface areas. Organisations such as Groundwork NI, the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) and the Belfast Regeneration Office have developed strategies based around youth diversion in an attempt to stop young people participating in ‘recreational rioting’ and to educate them on the impact of the violence and disorder on local residents.

Community representatives, with the support of independent organisations such as Mediation Northern Ireland, TIDES and the Belfast Interface Project, have established forums and contact groups where opposing communities have an opportunity to engage in dialogue and debate contentious issues. Several community groups have also adopted Mobile Phone Networks as a mechanism for alleviating potential trouble in their areas and dispelling the rumours and scare-mongering that often have the potential to develop into large-scale violence and disorder.4
Impact of violence and disorder

The research provided people with an opportunity to discuss the impact that the violence had on their families and themselves. In some cases the effects were short term, while in other cases the effects may have yet to emerge. It was difficult to determine whether one community was more badly affected, and it was both impossible and insensitive to judge one person’s pain and suffering over another’s. A large number of families were forced to abandon their homes due to petrol and blast bomb attacks. The research indicated that the majority of displaced families came from the Protestant/Unionist community in Cluan Place, with several families refusing to return. There were several reported incidents of parents having to lift children from their beds in the middle of the night, often leaving personal belongings behind. There were fewer cases of displaced families in the Short Strand because most people owned their homes and therefore were not in a position to leave them. However, in several cases mothers and children had to be placed in accommodation in other parts of the Strand, while fathers remained and defended their properties.

There was a general consensus that young people were detrimentally affected, some more so than others, by the interface violence. Accounts of children behaving more aggressively, bed wetting, having nightmares, being overly dependent on their parents, exhibiting poor concentration levels and refusing to play outside were common from both sides of the community. Discussions with education authorities revealed that several young people who lived within the immediate interface area underwent significant behavioural changes both during and after the communal disorder. Children were frightened to play outside during break times. Those that did engage in play often participated in role play scenarios acting out violent exchanges between Catholics and Protestants. In some cases children would refuse to participate in school activities because they thought some harm would come to their parents while they were away from them.

Many of the adult interviewees talked about a sense of disbelief, paranoia and denial expressed by long term residents of the Short Strand and Inner East Belfast. Large sections of both communities felt that they were caught up in a conflict that they knew nothing about nor wanted to be involved in. Several vivid accounts highlighting the mental stress adults went through were recounted to the author. There was a strong feeling of helplessness expressed
by adults. This was heightened when their children would constantly bombard them with questions about the violence:

Why do the people hate us so much?
Why do they want to hurt us?
Am I going to be safe tonight?

In most cases adults did not have the answers to these questions, because they could not comprehend the situation themselves. The inability to answer truthfully made many feel inadequate and believe that they were failing their children. Several adults noted that at the time there was a growing dependence on alcohol and prescription drugs as a way to calm nerves and assist in sleeping. In most cases this decreased as the levels of violence minimised, but for some the memories are still too raw and their dependence on drugs and alcohol continues.

Documenting the full impact of the violence and disorder has proved difficult. There are adults and young people who have yet to show signs of being affected, but many respondents who live within both communities feel that substantial numbers of people will require future assistance to deal with the implications of the events of 2002.

Influence for policy and practice

This research was the first comprehensive and extensive piece of work that offered an examination and reflection of a traumatic period in the lives of Short Strand and Inner East residents. Emerging from the discussions with residents and community workers were a number of key themes that many felt contributed to the decrease in violence and disorder. It is important to note that although interfaces can be geographically very close, the factors and issues driving the violence within communities can be very different, thus impacting the mechanisms which could limit it. Therefore, the lessons learnt from this research may not be transferable to other interfaces. However, it is important that they are documented so that those involved in interface management can determine whether the factors and influences present may facilitate a decrease in violence and disorder. The key themes that have been associated with the decrease in interface violence in East Belfast/Short Strand have been outlined below. The themes have also been placed within the context of Northern Ireland as a whole.
1. Community leadership

The majority of respondents felt that community representatives and leaders were instrumental in reducing the interface violence. It was apparent that after nearly six months of constant violence and disorder, both communities were suffering from the strains and pressures common with living on an interface. Several prominent figures from each community took control of their respective areas and controlled and managed behaviour along the interface. This created an environment where people could re-group, assess the situation, and address their concerns in a sensible and constructive manner.

Furthermore, local residents requested that anyone who did not live on or close to the interfaces would not be welcome in the area. Residents became aware that the main protagonists in the violence were outsiders who never experienced any of the consequences of their actions. This finding has been reflected in previous research into interface violence\(^5\) that noted that violence is often perpetrated from ‘hinterlands’ close to the interface, and that interface communities are the site, rather than the sole source, of intercommunity violence.\(^6\)

Regardless of where an interface is located, it is imperative that individuals are present who have strong leadership qualities and can rationalise the situation. It became apparent from the research that it may take time for these individuals to emerge, but it is crucial that they are provided with the support to exert their control on the situation, and that communities are seen to make decisions themselves.

2. Outside support

It was apparent that organisations from outside the area, along with political representatives, played a pivotal role in creating an environment where discussions could take place between the two communities. Groups that had no vested interest in the disputes and which were perceived as neutral facilitated discussions and provided guidance and advice on contentious issues. Ultimately, co-operation and participation was required from the communities themselves, but the input from outside organisations should not be undervalued.
One avenue of support was the deployment of independent monitors from Belfast Interface Project, Mediation Northern Ireland and TIDES along the interfaces to observe and monitor behaviour. A Mobile Phone Network was also re-established to provide a further mechanism for monitoring incidents. It was clear from discussions with community workers that many of the previous violent exchanges were the result of lies and rumours. These would be spread throughout the community and often resulted in young people initiating attacks on the ‘other’ side. It was envisaged that the independent monitors, along with the Mobile Phone Network, would dispel the opportunity for lies and increase levels of communication between both sides.

There are times when individuals can become both physically and emotionally entangled in the interface violence. Therefore, groups and individuals who have no specific attachment or agenda with the interface or either community can be crucial in bringing a sense of normality and rationalisation to the situation. There have been a number of episodes in Northern Ireland’s history where intermediaries have been crucial in creating an environment where both sides have been able to develop an understanding of the consequences of their actions. This is similar for incidents associated with interface violence, where respected outsiders have been able to re-focus individuals away from the violence and disorder and into discussions on methods to decrease the violence.

3. Paramilitary influence

There is no doubt that paramilitaries from both sides showed high levels of restraint when others expected them to engage in open warfare. During this period of time five Protestants were shot, and people expected Loyalist paramilitaries to retaliate in kind. However, the Loyalist groups, which were part of the Inner East Forum, an ad hoc body consisting of statutory, voluntary and community groups representing the residents of Inner East Belfast, resisted. This Forum was crucial in advising and assisting Loyalist groups in confronting the violence in their community. Several interviewees from the Unionist community were critical of the non-response by the Loyalist paramilitaries, and noted that sections of their community had not forgotten. At particular times this has been brought up to mock and ridicule the leadership of Loyalist groups.
Similarly, representatives from Republican groups were criticised by some residents from the Short Strand for not standing up to the Loyalist violence emanating from Inner East Belfast. People witnessed their homes being set on fire and their children injured by nail and blast bombs, and they felt that Republicans were either not doing enough to defend their community or were not pursuing retaliation for the injustices that they were experiencing.

However, it is important to note that the research findings did not absolve paramilitaries of total blame for what happened in 2002. There was evidence that at times paramilitaries initiated and encouraged violent confrontations at the interfaces, especially in relation to the behaviour of young people. However, in retrospect the fact that neither Republican nor Loyalist paramilitaries embarked on a concerted campaign to destroy the other community meant that no lives were lost throughout the prolonged interface violence.

Regardless of where interface violence is located, there has been a constant debate around the role of paramilitary organisations in initiating it, controlling it, and ultimately reducing it. There are those that perceive paramilitaries to be the catalyst for this violence, while others are more inclined to see interface violence as an element of anti-social behaviour with young people as the main protagonists. It is fair to assume that the majority of areas where interface violence occurs historically have been the territory of paramilitary groups. Therefore, to some extent, they are willingly or unwillingly involved. In the past, their participation in any approaches to decreasing violence was crucial. However, as the main Republican and Loyalist paramilitary organisations remove themselves from Northern Ireland society it becomes much more problematic to place them within the context of interface violence. Therefore, mechanisms to decrease interface violence will have to focus more on the role of young people within the framework of anti-social behaviour programmes and initiatives.

4. Increased security presence

In most cases, interviewees were very critical of the policing of the situation throughout 2002, regardless of their community background. The general view from the Unionist community was that the police ignored attacks from Nationalists and instead forced down Protestants who were trying to
defend their own communities. On the other hand, those from the Nationalist community felt that the police facilitated Loyalist attacks on their homes and ignored their calls for assistance. Others, however, felt that the police were in an impossible situation, and that sometimes they became the victim of the rumour mill that was circulating at the time; that is, people started to believe unsubstantiated claims about police behaviour and in effect distanced themselves from the police without provocation.

In the latter part of the year the police, along with the army, began to swamp the interface areas with large numbers of personnel. Huge resources were placed into the area in an attempt to curtail the nightly disturbances. To many observers, this was a success and created an environment with no rioters or petrol and blast bombs. As a result tensions began to decrease and the stage was set for both communities to establish contact and ultimately engage in dialogue. However, there were those from the Nationalist community who were critical of this policy adopted by the security forces. They felt in particular that the deployment of the Royal Irish Regiment in Short Strand was unnecessary, insensitive and simply increased anger and frustration within the Catholic community.

As Northern Ireland moves into a stable and peaceful society where the majority of communities recognise and work with the PSNI, it is hoped that large scale military style operations will not be required to address interface violence. Furthermore, it is anticipated that relationships between the police and local communities will be very much different than in previous years. This hopefully will allay fears around policing operations and create the environment where measured police responses will be sufficient to decrease interface violence.

5. Economic implications

The research highlighted the detrimental effect that the interface violence had on the local economy and the potential economic regeneration programmes for the area. Further attempts to determine whether there was a significant link between the failing local economy and the decline in interface violence proved inconclusive. However, a small number of interviewees felt that the closing of local businesses and the lack of investment had an impact on local residents who were ashamed of what their community had become.
They speculate that this negative perception of the area invigorated some people into seeking a peaceful solution to the interface violence.

Since The Good Friday Agreement (1998) and subsequent peace initiatives culminating in the devolution of power back to Stormont in May 2007 there has been a growing awareness of the economic implications violence and disorder can have on local communities. People’s attitudes and general tolerance of inter-community violence have changed. To a large extent people are no longer prepared to accept violence as a normal activity. There is a sense of pride returning to communities that for years were synonymous with rioting, violence and disorder. Paramilitary organisations are leaving the scene, along with many of their symbols and murals. Programmes such as Re-Imaging Communities are providing people with an opportunity to transform their local environments. Economic investment along with statutory support into communities is creating an atmosphere that many believe will limit the opportunity for interface violence.

6. Summary

Within the context of the research project the importance of each of these programmes, initiatives and group decisions cannot be understated. They were each critical in managing the interface violence and ultimately bringing a sense of control to the situation. Determining who or what was most influential in minimising the violence was difficult. They all played a significant role, and should best be viewed as a collective process and not as individual approaches. Within the Northern Ireland context there is no single mechanism for decreasing interface violence. Numerous factors are involved, some more important than others. However, as we move out of a peace process and into a political process it is anticipated that many of the factors that appear to contribute to interface violence can be addressed prior to these incidents occurring.
Long-term challenges for reconciliation work in Northern Ireland

Upon concluding the research project it became apparent that there were no generic recommendations that could have been developed from the findings that would have relevance to others areas in Northern Ireland. What happened in Short Strand and Inner East Belfast in 2002 was synonymous with that particular area. Due to the nature of the conflict and those involved, the research was unable to apportion cause or blame on any one specific group, community or issue. However, the entire process of developing, participating and concluding the research was in itself a successful outcome, one that possibly could be conducted in other communities that experienced traumatic episodes and events.

Primarily the research involved two parallel pieces of work with single identity communities but explored ways in which the actual research process could potentially foster dialogue and greater understanding of each other’s perspectives. Prior to the initiation of the research there was limited dialogue between the two communities. There was also a degree of apprehension about opening up discussions about a traumatic series of events that were still relatively fresh in the minds of those that lived through them. People questioned the notion of when something should be deemed history, and therefore acceptable to talk about. Since the conclusion of the interface violence, both communities had developed their own interpretation of the events. They had their own views on who was responsible and why it happened. Unsurprisingly these were very different view points, but to some extent it was their way of overcoming the legacy of the violence and moving on. History within the context of Northern Ireland has been interpreted differently by Nationalists and Unionists on a number of occasions. Over the years there have been limited opportunities for both Nationalists and Unionists to tell their story, but more importantly gain an understanding of the ‘other community’ and how they perceive a similar event. This research gave both communities in Short Strand and Inner East Belfast the opportunity to participate in such a process.

There have been ‘past focused’ initiatives such as the Ardoyne Commemoration Project (2002), a community based approach to post conflict truth telling, established in 1998 to record the testimonies of the relatives and friends of all the conflict related victims from Ardoyne in North Belfast. A
recent evaluation of the project conducted by Lundy and McGovern (2006) concluded that what mattered was not only what ‘truth was told’, but the process of ‘telling the truth’ itself.

In relation to the research in Short Strand/Inner East Belfast it quickly emerged that for a number of participants being part of the process, and having the opportunity to simply talk about their experiences and have someone listen, was nearly as important as gaining an understanding of what the ‘other’ community perceived events to be. The findings also revealed that both communities appeared to deny the reality of the other side’s experiences through ignorance. This has been a general theme through many events in Northern Ireland’s history. It is often easier to portray the other community as the aggressor and your own community as the victim. However, by conducting this research it became apparent that it was important for one community to acknowledge the other community’s reality and experiences; without such acknowledgements the situation would remain intractable.

Conclusion

The research primarily focused on the legacy of the violence and disorder in the interface and neighbouring areas of Short Strand and Inner East Belfast. Furthermore, it documented the negative impact that the violence had on the lives of local residents within both communities. One of the key rationales for conducting the research was that local residents from both areas indicated that participating in such work may contribute to their processes of understanding and ability to move on with their lives. To some extent the actual research, according to several participants, contributed to fostering a process of reconciliation and mutual understanding between the neighbouring communities.

The process that participants went through involved informal discussions with the researcher on their experiences of the interface violence in 2002. For many this was the first opportunity that they had to talk to anyone about what had happened and how it had impacted on their lives. In some respects it provided some degree of closure. Currently there is a debate within society surrounding the most appropriate method of providing closure for those affected by the Troubles. Recent media attention has focused on two initiatives
that many believe will go some way to creating an environment where people can move on and shape their own futures. The debate still rages about the merits of having some form of Truth Commission. Also, the PSNI have recently established a new Historical Enquiries Team. These projects, if fully adopted, will allow people a chance to provide their experiences of painful incidents, and give voices to those who have never been heard.

The research in East Belfast is one form of coming to terms with the past. It involved looking back, documenting and analysing a controversial period in the history of two communities whose relationship had been severely fragmented. People had an opportunity to recount their understandings, experiences and perceptions of what happened in the Short Strand and Inner East area of Belfast throughout 2002. The findings attempted to convey the differing and sometimes contrasting interpretations that the two communities had of what happened and why it happened. In retrospect this was very successful, with many interviewees simply grateful to have the chance to bring a degree of closure to a painful event in their lives. Furthermore, for many it was an opportunity to read for the first time from the published report the experiences of the ‘other’ community, and there was an acknowledgement that one person’s suffering was no different than another’s.

The second lesson from the research related to the management of interface violence. It was apparent that several events and programmes minimised and limited the levels of violence. These initiatives can be seen at three levels: voluntary (the role of community workers), statutory (police tactics and expanding peace lines) and governmental (direct funding for interface communities). It was clearly evident that input was required from all three to create the environment where co-operation and dialogue could exist between the Unionist and Nationalist communities and bring an end to the prolonged interface violence. These approaches could be applied to interfaces throughout Northern Ireland. Issues around housing regeneration, economic and social development, youth policy, and capacity building at a community level need to be addressed at all levels, so that interface violence will be prevented and not just managed.
Notes

2. Byrne, 2005.
References


Community, Truth-Recovery and Conflict Transformation
‘From Below’

Patricia Lundy, University of Ulster, and
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Introduction

In the North of Ireland there has been a long-term and often heated debate, particularly within civil society, about how to address the legacy of the conflict and unresolved issues of the past. Truth recovery is an extremely emotive issue and the subject matter is highly sensitive since it brings into question the actions of the state and paramilitary groups. This chapter critically examines the first community-based truth-recovery project in the North of Ireland, the Ardoyne Commemoration Project (ACP). The ACP was set up to examine aspects of the legacy of the conflict in the Ardoyne community and in particular to document and ‘give voice’ to the experiences of relatives and friends of victims of the conflict. The aim of the follow-up evaluation, which was funded under Peace II, was to critically assess the role, impact and methodology of the ACP. The ACP is unique internationally. The evaluation of it offers valuable insights and lessons learned to societies moving out of conflict worldwide and seeking to address the legacy of conflict.

This chapter is structured into five parts. Firstly, there is a brief overview of transitional justice. This is followed in the second section by a discussion of the debate on truth recovery in the North of Ireland. In the context of addressing the conflict and promoting sustainable peace, the third section examines the nature of the project, its goals, how the work was carried out, and the perceived beneficiaries. In order to shed further light on this, the principles that underpinned the work of the ACP including participation, local ownership and control, and the role of ‘insiders’ are explained. The fourth and main section of the chapter explores in detail what participants and the wider community felt were the benefits of engaging in the project. This draws on a
critical evaluation of the ACP conducted eight months after the project had ended, and explores the lessons learned for policy and practice. The fifth and final section sets out a number of recommendations. It concludes that an emphasis upon popular participation and local agency is a necessary means to achieve some of the ends identified in much transitional justice discourse and to embed such mechanisms sufficient to the creation of sustainable peace.

Transitional Justice and Truth Recovery

Truth recovery and truth commissions in particular are key components of transitional justice strategies that are increasingly part of negotiated peace agreements. Modern transitional justice has its roots in post-World War I deliberations on how to deal with German aggression. International criminal accountability emerged during the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials set up in the aftermath of World War II. This has continued to develop through the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, culminating in the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Central here is the emphasis on knowing the truth about the past as a key component of accountability. Priscilla Hayner considers that ‘the field has developed in response to the demands and differing circumstances of many transitional states around the world, and the increased public interest and international expectation that accountability is due after atrocity’. In response, a panoply of international actors including the United Nations, regional and non–governmental organizations (NGOs), international financial and other institutions have embraced and employed transitional justice dialogue and mechanisms in their interventions in ‘post-conflict’ situations.

Truth recovery is usually conducted via official ‘top down’ mechanisms such as truth commissions. Since the early 1970s there has been a proliferation of truth commissions varying in remit and style in countries as diverse as Uganda, Argentina, Guatemala, South Africa, Ghana, East Timor and Morocco, to mention but a few. The rationale for initiating truth commissions stems from a desire within post-conflict societies to uncover ‘the truth’ about past injustices and wrongdoing that in many cases has been deliberately ‘silenced’. This is often, but not always, linked to authoritarian regimes where there has been a breakdown in the rule of law and where human rights abuses have been carried out with impunity. A growing number of commentators are of the opinion that drawing a line under the past is not a viable option for
countries coming out of violent and protracted conflict. As Hamber, Nageng and O’Malley have argued “sleeping dogs do not lie and past traumas do not simply pass or disappear with the passage of time”. It is claimed that truth commissions can bring positive benefits including ‘closure’, ‘healing’, ‘catharsis’, and ‘reconciliation’, and may assist society in general to move forward by working through a violent past. Underpinning such processes is a restorative rather than a retributive conception of justice.

There are also numerous criticisms of truth commissions, not least that they reopen old wounds and may generate further polarization; ‘the truth’ delivered is often partial and limited; their ‘top down’ nature can marginalize victims, and there are often unpalatable tradeoffs between truth and justice on the one hand and stability and pragmatic politics on the other. More recently there is a growing debate that transitional justice is a narrowly defined ‘top down’ discourse that needs to be re-conceptualised to include a participatory and ‘bottom-up’ approach. Some commentators have gone as far as to suggest that, at its worst, institutionalised ‘truth-telling’ may allow for little more than the management and incorporation of memory, a useful marketing tool for the state. In reality, despite the popularity of transitional justice efforts internationally, there is limited empirical evidence about their tangible outcomes and attitudes towards them in recipient societies. It was this lack of empirical data that inspired the authors to conduct an evaluation of the ACP. Although this was a community-based process it was felt that it could contribute to the wider debate on the merits of truth recovery.

The Debate in the North of Ireland

In the North of Ireland the truth and justice debate has become one of the most highly contentious issues within civil society and the wider political arena. Nowhere is this more fraught and seemingly polarised than the debate over whether or not there should be a truth commission. The arguments for and against such a process are complex and are discussed in detail elsewhere. Thirty years of conflict between the British State and armed groups from the Nationalist/Catholic and Unionist/Protestant populations were more or less brought to a conclusion by the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Nine years later the possibility of establishing an official truth process to address the legacies of the past is still uncertain. This is not due to any lack of debate on the issue. Widespread discussion of the pros and cons of various
truth recovery mechanisms have been ongoing for several years. However, fears that a truth commission may not help in achieving the desired goals of truth, justice and progressive social change have limited progress in this direction. So too have the political circumstances of post-conflict transition. None of the major parties to the conflict regarded a specifically past-focused mechanism as a priority in the negotiations leading up to the signing of the Agreement. Indeed, not confronting the causes and competing explanations of the conflict was part of a deliberate state strategy to obtain a realpolitik consensus. The consequence of what Christine Bell\textsuperscript{12} has described as the ‘constructive ambiguity’ of the Irish peace process has been a ‘piecemeal approach’ to dealing with the past.

As the peace process unfolded within the Catholic/Nationalist community, locally based groups and initiatives emerged to contest, consciously or not, the dominant official discourse, and a steady momentum in favour of uncovering ‘the truth’ as a means of dealing with the past emerged. Indeed, memory of the conflict, and particularly the memory of its victims, has emerged as a key area for the ideological contestation and ‘site of struggle’ in the period of post-conflict transition. This is reflected in the wide range and growing number of truth and justice initiatives that have included: campaigns for public inquiries and (re)opening of contentious cases relating to state killing and collusion; community-led inquiries; legal challenges; utilisation of the European Court of Human Rights; and other initiatives such as oral history and ‘story telling’ projects, which not only documented accounts of the conflict but also proposed mechanisms for dealing with the past.\textsuperscript{13} Such initiatives as means to uncover ‘the truth’ have emerged in the absence of any officially sanctioned truth process and, in varying ways, are regarded as contesting state ‘sanctioned forgetting’ of the conflict. There does appear to be a growing appetite within this particular constituency for uncovering ‘the truth’ and revisiting the past in order to establish how and why their loved ones were killed. For advocates of truth recovery, dealing with the past and uncovering the truth is regarded as a key cornerstone and basis upon which trust can begin to be built and society can move forward.

Some of the strongest opposition to truth recovery has come from within the Unionist/Protestant community.\textsuperscript{14} For those who argue that the past should be left alone truth recovery is seen as unnecessary, that genuine truth recovery will never happen and that it would have a destabilising impact on an already fragile political system. A key concern for Unionists appears to be that a truth
commission is a ‘Trojan Horse’ and an attempt by Nationalists/Catholics to ‘rewrite history’.15 This is related in other complex ways to general political disenchantment, a lack of confidence or trust in ‘self’ and distrust of the ‘other’ community. Loyalist paramilitary groups in particular have expressed unease at the danger that they might be used as a convenient scapegoat, and they regard their communities as being most at risk of being portrayed in a negative light and thus losing out in any truth recovery process.16 There is the view that it has the potential to cause more harm than good by ‘opening up old wounds’ and might even stimulate rivalry. For others the political situation still remains too volatile and a truth commission is not viable unless the conflict can be said to be truly over. At the time of going to press there is widespread speculation that in the context of positive developments in the political arena and the reestablishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly the British government may announce a public consultation and re-evaluation on how to deal with the past.

**Addressing the Legacy of the Conflict and Promoting Sustainable Peace**

In the context of a fragmented official approach to dealing with the legacy of the conflict communities have responded with a variety of initiatives. The ACP represents the first example of a community initiating a ‘bottom-up’ truth recovery process. Ardoyne is a socially disadvantaged Republican working class community in North Belfast with a population of approximately 7,500 people. In 1998 in the wake of the cease-fires and the signing of the Good Friday Agreement an opportunity emerged for reflection on the past 30 years or more of political conflict. In July of that year the ACP took advantage of the space created by the peace process and the reflective mood to initiate what developed into a community driven truth recovery process. There was no blueprint for this type of project locally or internationally. Over a four-year period the ACP collated and edited over 300 interviews, testimonies, and eyewitness accounts of relatives and friends of the 99 people who died as a result of the conflict in the Ardoyne community. In 2002 a 543-page book was published, entitled *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth*, containing the testimonies and six historical chapters contextualising the conflict. The principles and processes that underpinned the work of the ACP encompassed much more than pulling together a series of interviews for the production of a book. Drawing upon the follow-up evaluation of the ACP this chapter intends to critically examine the role that such voluntary sector community-based
processes may (or may not) play in peace-building, transitional justice and post-conflict resolution.

There were two main reasons for the emergence of the ACP. First, the terms of the GFA led to the emergence of a politically charged ‘victims agenda’. A number of newly formed victims groups campaigned against the provisions within the GFA that dealt with the early release of prisoners on the basis of the rights of ‘innocent’ victims. At the same time, the appointment of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield as the Victims’ Commissioner given responsibility for victims’ issues by the Minister for Armed Forces was seen by many Nationalists (and some of those involved in the ACP) as instituting a ‘hierarchy of victimhood’. Second, the signing of the GFA signalled an apparent end to the conflict and offered an opportunity for reflection on past events and loss. The political considerations outlined above were undoubtedly secondary to this desire to ‘remember the dead’. This was the primary and over-riding reason why the ACP was created. As a result, a number of relatives, community activists and interested individuals within Ardoyne met to discuss ways in which they might commemorate those from the area killed as a result of the conflict. Numerous options were considered, including a physical memorial. After a series of meetings it was decided to do so through a book that would contain the memories of the families of the dead.

A committee of eight people (later reduced to five) with a chairperson and treasurer was established. The committee provided the organisational framework for the day-to-day running of the project. The members of the committee were also those most active in carrying out the work. However, a wider network of a dozen or more people provided support, advice, time and energy at various stages. This was highly sensitive work and the conflict has undoubtedly left its mark in Ardoyne. Blanket surveillance and the activities of state intelligence agencies had a particularly damaging impact and engendered a deep sense of alienation and distrust, particularly of outsiders. It is against this backdrop that the ACP developed and carried out its work. Consequently, community participation was regarded as central for both practical and philosophical/ethical reasons. All except one of the committee members were from Ardoyne. Indeed, the concept of ‘embeddedness’ was central to the ACP. Being ‘embedded’ meant that, in terms of its instigation, design, and practice the project was driven by the principle of local community ownership and control.
The Research: Lessons Learned for Policy and Practice

Trying to understand what it was that participants in the Ardoyne Commemoration Project thought they would get out of the work and the extent to which these expectations were achieved (or not) was one of the central aims of the evaluation research that the authors conducted in the aftermath of the ACP. To this end a series of interviews were conducted with thirty relatives who had provided their testimonies to the ACP and four people who worked on the project. In addition, interviews were conducted with six representatives of a range of groups and bodies within Ardoyne and six interviews with representatives from the mainly Unionist community. The research was carried out between May 2003 and March 2004. The discussion that follows draws upon the evaluation findings and provides insights into some of the ways in which engaging in the project impacted upon individuals, their families, the wider Ardoyne community and beyond. As noted earlier, this case study illustrates the ways in which a bottom-up truth recovery process can make a significant contribution to transitional justice.

It has been argued that a sense of victimhood often stems from memories of unacknowledged or unreconciled historic losses. It soon became clear that for most participants the main value in the work of the ACP was that it afforded them recognition. Some participants also stated that they found the interview process therapeutic. Many noted that they felt it was important that someone was listening and that a space was found to talk about personal and traumatic events, which was often difficult to do even within families. Certainly such evidence suggests that speaking out had a therapeutic value for participants in general. At the same time, however, most felt that recalling traumatic memories was an emotional and sometimes difficult process for them and their families to undertake. Many had never spoken publicly about the death of their loved one and the impact on their family. Yet, despite the difficulty in recounting traumatic experiences, giving one’s testimony was generally viewed as an important and necessary thing to do in order to have their accounts recorded, documented, and put into the public arena. Time and again participants remarked that their own personal costs in giving testimony were secondary to the importance of raising awareness and having their story told.
Closely tied to the question of recognition was the desire for remembrance. Again, this was a primary factor motivating individuals to participate in the project. Giving testimony was regarded as a beneficial thing to do, not necessarily because the experience was therapeutic or cathartic, but because it brought a tangible outcome. For some this meant putting a human face on statistics and that the community would collectively remember. The following quote reflects such views:

*I think the success of the book [Ardoyne: the Untold Truth] was that it allowed people’s own voices to tell the story. That’s where everybody could identify with it because it was very much their story, it wasn’t somebody else telling it. It was how they felt and saw things, and it worked for them, and people became real again. They no longer were just a statistic or a name on a wall, and it brought people to life again.*

For many relatives the denial of ‘truth’ and an enduring sense of injustice were key factors that prompted them to participate in the project. This desire or need to provide testimony was not just about telling one’s story; it is better understood as bearing witness. In these circumstances ‘truth’ is used to denounce or challenge a perceived injustice and to set aright an official account. It is, in this sense, a way of doing justice. In a similar vein, the restoration of dignity to victims may be best achieved by a truth recovery process that seeks to give the victim a full role in the telling of the story of a past of gross violations. Participating in the ACP may therefore have been particularly important (and had a positive impact) for certain relatives because it enabled them to challenge what they perceived as the denial of truth. Certainly in the responses to the follow-up research the restoration of dignity through recognition and acknowledgement in the book, particularly to families of alleged informers, was overwhelmingly regarded as a welcome outcome of the project. There were thirteen people in the community killed by Republicans. A number of these were alleged informers. These were among the most sensitive and challenging cases that the ACP had to grapple with. Many participants, and not only those directly affected by such circumstances, talked about how important the process had been for opening up a space within the community for such difficult subjects to be discussed. That dialogue and recognition had been developed around experiences that had been shrouded in so much silence was widely seen as one of the most important contributions the project had made.
In addition, the relatives of victims of state violence were given the opportunity to challenge what they perceived as the denial of truth in official accounts. It was apparent that some relatives, and particularly those whose loved ones had been killed by the state, had never been told ‘the truth’ about the circumstances of the death. For some such families the ACP was credited with helping to restore dignity and, in some senses, achieving a level of justice through the power of ‘truth-telling’. However, the idea of doing justice in such cases is a complex affair and the importance of recognition needs to be set alongside the desire for acknowledgement and accountability from and of the state itself. Being given the space to tell ‘their truth’ may have been justice for some, but not for others, as this participant argued:

*Some [relatives] see their justice as somehow somebody coming along at some stage and telling the truth. But also other people see their justice as them being given the space to tell their story, that’s their justice. So there [are] different levels. I think when you talk to so many different families and victims they have a different thing about justice but generally it is around truth-telling.*

As a result of engaging in the ACP many participants argued that they had regained a sense of control over their own experiences and memories. As problematic as the concept undoubtedly is, there was a sense that the project had allowed for both individual and collective empowerment. For such relatives participation was seen as a way to challenge the negative label of victimhood that for many symbolised helplessness, passiveness and powerlessness. Involvement in the project through providing testimony, it was suggested, helped recast relatives in the role of proactive agents of change and not as either helpless or powerless. Again, this was likened to the question of recognition as something that was not merely given or conferred but the result of an active process. The project was therefore seen as a vehicle through which relatives could make recognition happen. This feeling of being more proactive and becoming agents of change was undoubtedly important to participants and appeared to promote a more positive sense of self and community.

Recognition was linked to the importance of documenting previously excluded or marginalised voices. The value and symbolism of individuals having the opportunity to tell their story were accentuated by a general perception in the area that they had been mistreated and misrepresented by those elements of society who often command the process of telling the present and the past: the media and academia. Antagonism toward the media
was particularly strong for many relatives, who felt that their experiences had been the subject of profound, and often systematic, misrepresentation. Setting the record straight and saying what really happened by writing back were powerful incentives for involvement in the ACP.

Almost all the participants argued that being able to challenge history and to engage in a process of writing their own past were some of the most important goals and achievements of the project. Interviews were transcribed by a member of the project team and were then edited. The initial edited version was then handed back to the interviewee who was given a completely free hand to alter their testimony in any way they saw fit. The editorial control provided through this handing back phase was almost universally credited with having afforded this crucial sense of ownership and agency of narration. Clearly for those who were involved in providing their testimony for the book, achieving the emancipatory ends of the project (the validation of previously excluded popular knowledge, affording an opportunity to bear witness and challenge the dominant public sphere’s readings of the past) was as dependent on the actual process that was undertaken as it was upon the final outcome. What mattered was not only what ‘truth’ was told, but the process of ‘telling the truth’ itself.

Community participation stood out as the single most important aspect of the ACP process for the majority of participants interviewed, and indeed for the wider community. The method of handing back edited testimonies, which was a key feature the work of the ACP, created a sense of individual and collective ownership and was regarded as a fundamental strength and positive outcome of the project. It is in gaining direct control of the knowledge produced through such work that empowerment takes place. In just the same way a victim-centred ‘truth-telling’ process needs to place the bearer of testimony at the heart of the decision-making process. Overwhelmingly, it was felt that the sensitivities of the project necessitated the use of ‘insiders’ and individuals that were respected and rooted in the community. A key issue of concern when doing such sensitive work is the issue of trust. Undertaking work with ‘insiders’ trusted by local people created far greater possibilities and produced the sort of knowledge often ‘hidden’ from ‘outsiders’. Any process devising wider strategies to deal with the legacy of the past needs to be conscious of the problems of accessing such experiences. The use of ‘insiders’ could just as conceivably exclude certain ‘voices’ and lead to
guarded and partial accounts and self-censorship. It is therefore imperative that those involved in such work are conscious of this tension and are fully reflective in their practice throughout.

Intra-community conflict resolution was the most frequently mentioned positive outcome of the ACP process. A significant contribution of a bottom-up, participatory truth recovery process is its capacity to get to the nitty-gritty of intra-community conflict, understand the dynamics and be able to resolve certain unresolved issues. Ardoyne is not a homogenous community and there are very real and longstanding divisions, some of which are a by-product of the political conflict. The project created a process or mechanism to deal with difficult internal conflict-related issues and promoted resolution of what were often seen as ‘taboo subjects’ at a number of different levels. The experience of the ACP would suggest that a bottom-up, participatory approach can make a significant contribution to creating dialogue at the community level.

One of the most serious limitations of unofficial, bottom-up processes in general is their inability to uncover previously unknown information from outside agencies, obtain some form of official recognition or recompense, or pursue accountability. That said, official truth recovery initiatives can themselves face huge problems in this regard, not least through the continued opposition and lack of co-operation of state agencies to finding ways of dealing with past injustice. Bottom-up, unofficial processes can be more adept at uncovering previously ‘hidden truths’ that can lead on to other things. They can be highly effective in building a ‘case to answer’, playing a vital role in documenting human rights abuses and patterns of violations that make it increasingly difficult for the state to continue to deny culpability.

Finally, perhaps the most significant limitation of all for the ACP, concerned the difficulties of conducting such sensitive research ‘across the divide’. This certainly proved to be an issue for the ACP. Projects with a single identity focus call into question the validity of the ‘untold truths’ they are able to tell, though again, such criticisms can also be levelled at state-led processes. Being embedded in a particular community may have been a prerequisite for conducting the work of the project but it also defined its extent. In a small number of cases the very nature of the ACP made access difficult. This was particularly so where the victim involved was from a Unionist background. Despite great efforts, the lack of community-based conduits of contact proved
to be an insurmountable obstacle in at least one case. Similarly, the compilation of the list of victims and interviewees was circumscribed by the structural limits of communal division. The remit of the project was to include all victims who had been either born (or lived for a significant period of their lives) in the area. However, a substantial number of Unionist residents of Ardoyne left (or were forced out) during the mass population movements in Belfast in the tumultuous years of the early 1970s. It is unknown if any of these Unionist former residents became conflict victims. Perhaps even more significantly this did not even come to light as an issue until after the project had finished, during the authors’ follow-up research work. While the intent of the project was to be inclusive (and certainly all victims who were known were included, regardless of their status or the agency responsible), the reality of communal division impacted on the efficacy and extent of that inclusivity.

**Recommendations and Challenges for Reconciliation Work in Northern Ireland**

In a situation where there was a limited sense of control and agency over much of the largely elite-centred political process, there was a range of positive consequences that arose from providing a space within the community for confronting and discussing the difficult legacies of conflict. Instilling a sense of agency in one sphere can have important outcomes in the promotion of genuine popular democratic participation in others. Undertaking work with ‘insiders’ trusted by local people created far greater possibilities that the work undertaken would produce the sort of knowledge often screened away from ‘outsiders’. Any process devising wider strategies to deal with the legacy of the past needs to be conscious of the problems of accessing such hidden experiences. In similar vein, the often voiced dislike for the bureaucratisation of post-conflict issues could be largely circumvented and local capacities to deal with issues and problems could be endorsed and validated. Finally, the work of the ACP did not happen in isolation. Perhaps the abiding feature of post-conflict transitional justice work being undertaken in the North of Ireland is that, largely in the absence of official processes, unofficial, community-based and participatory initiatives have flourished. Networks of contact, shared experience and support emerged as a sort of transitional social movement that may again have more wide-ranging and positive democratic outcomes in the future. However, there is a danger in
overstating the merits of a participatory approach and over-romanticising the
notion and role of ‘the community’. Power relations and structures of
inequality exist in all communities. Those engaging in a participatory
approach need to be aware of and sensitive to structures of inequality and
ensure they do not reinforce them.

In addition, the advantage of ‘first hand familiarity’ for the researcher
working within ‘one’s own’ community is paralleled by a lack of access and
understanding when attempting work with the ‘other community’. Clearly the
path of joint research work is one response to this dilemma. But the suspicion
of such ‘joint work’ cannot be underestimated and will, again, potentially have
a profound impact on the willingness of participants to reveal their feelings
and experiences in as full a way as possible. Perhaps opening up a public space
between specific projects rather than within them is the key to unlocking this
particular problem. The continuing prevalence of communal division in parts
of the North where the conflict had its most devastating impact is a reality that
researchers in this area need to recognise. A research project that sets out to
‘cross the divide’ may find great problems in engendering the necessary level
of trust to produce meaningful testimonies.
Notes

1. The Ardoyne Commemoration Project could not have been completed without the generous funding from Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. Small grants were also received from CRC and the Belfast Regeneration Project.


References


A Shared Future?
Reconciliation and Young People

It is often said that young people are the future, but young people are here now, in the present, and have very current needs, wishes and hopes. Young people growing up in a society emerging from conflict have the further challenges of contested concepts of identity and history to grapple with. The following chapters look to young people as both the present and the future, tackling issues related to their every day lives and aspirations. How young people develop and respond to the challenges of identity and history will continue to have an impact on reconciliation and peace-building in Northern Ireland. By understanding their thoughts, responses and hopes, initiatives and policies can be developed that will encourage young people to consider their own roles and responsibilities in relation to reconciliation in Northern Ireland.
A Sustainable Peace?
Research as a Contribution to Peace Building in Northern Ireland
Is there anything else you would like to say about community relations in Northern Ireland?

Dirk Schubotz and Paula Devine, Queen’s University Belfast

Introduction

The Northern Ireland conflict has been regarded as one of the most thoroughly researched conflicts in the world. In 1993, a register of conflict-related research in Northern Ireland revealed that there were 605 projects undertaken on the subject, an enormous number considering its small geographical size. To date, despite the Peace Process, the interest in the conflict or relations between the two main communities has not decreased.

Whilst young people were one of the groups worst affected by past violence and sectarianism in Northern Ireland, most teenagers living in Northern Ireland today have grown up in more peaceful times and circumstances. In a recent study, Cairns, Mallett et al found that young people in Northern Ireland were in fact least likely to see themselves often or very often as victims of the Northern Ireland conflict.

One main aim of the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Peace II Programme) is to address the legacy of the conflict. Allied to this is the need to record the experiences and attitudes of young people living in Northern Ireland within a post-conflict situation. In this chapter we look at the findings of the annual Young Life and Times (YLT) surveys since 2003. YLT is an offshoot of the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey, which has recorded the attitudes, values and beliefs of the Northern Ireland adult population on a wide range of social policy issues since 1998. NILT has its roots in the Northern Ireland Social Attitudes surveys, which were conducted from 1989 to 1996. From 1998 to 2000, YLT ran alongside NILT, but after
methodological and conceptual considerations it was relaunched with a new format in 2003. YLT is now an independent postal survey of 16 year-olds with a representative sample drawn from the Child Benefit Register.

YLT annually records the experiences of 16 year-olds of school and their attitudes to community relations in Northern Ireland, as well as to other social and political issues. In 2003 and 2004 YLT was funded by the Peace II Programme (Measure 2.1) and set out ‘to monitor changing attitudes to community relations issues among 16 year-olds across Northern Ireland’. Consequently, the surveys have largely focused on questions related to community relations, sectarianism and cross-community contact (that is, contact between Catholics and Protestants, the two main socio-religious groups in Northern Ireland). With the survey results we aimed:

- To contribute to policy-making on community relations and evaluation of policy over the longer term; and
- To increase research knowledge of these issues.

Some of the core questions on community relations and cross-community contact asked in the Peace II funding period were also repeated in the subsequent surveys in 2005 and 2006. Here we discuss some of the key findings of the YLT surveys in relation to 16 year-olds’ attitudes to community relations. Beyond this we address the issue of how YLT succeeded in its two main aims.

**From ‘Us and Them?’ to ‘Cross-community integration and mixing’**

One of the most useful theoretical explanations for the relations between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland is that of inter-group conflict based on social categorisation developed by the social psychologist Henri Tajfel. According to his theory, people divide the social world they live in into two categories: ‘us’ and ‘them’ – *ingroups* and *outgroups*. Tajfel and his followers argue that humans do this because they are ‘cognitive miser’ by nature, that they can only consume a limited amount of information and therefore have to be selective in what information they deal with and absorb. As a consequence of this process, people develop social identities which distinguish them from others.
Processes of social categorisation as described by Tajfel’s theory have been used in the past to describe the ‘us versus them’ mentality of Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. When combined with the failure of political elites in seeking and finding acceptable consociational arrangements and compromises, social categorisation processes can lead to violent conflict. Divided societies like Northern Ireland have been seen as evidence for this.

Within the duration of the Peace II funding period, four brief Research Updates were published focusing on the subject of community relations and cross-community contact, which were directly based on YLT survey findings. Two qualitative research projects were also developed on the basis of YLT survey results, which further explored issues of cross-community relations and contact as well as sectarianism.

In ‘Us and Them?’ we reported that national and religious affiliation remained important markers of identity for 16 year-olds in Northern Ireland. However, most respondents had positive expectations about future community relations in Northern Ireland and felt that community relations had improved in the past five years.

In ‘Changing Times – or are they?’ Fullerton compared 16 year-olds’ attitudes to and experiences of community relations to those of the adult population, using data from the NILT surveys. The author concluded that young people were slightly more accepting of mixed-race and mixed-religion marriages, but less in favour of integration. However, according to Fullerton, main differences lay between respondents of different religions rather than different age groups.

In ‘What Now?’ we discussed how the changed political landscape in Northern Ireland, which had seen the DUP emerging as the strongest political party, had influenced the confidence in future community relations among young Protestants. We presented findings that showed that 16 year-olds who lived in mixed-religion areas or attended mixed-religion schools were far less likely to have no friends from other socio-religious backgrounds. We also, for the first time, addressed the issue of minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland. As a result of the increasing inward migration to Northern Ireland, in particular by Eastern European citizens, some YLT respondents had suggested we should be asking questions that related to this issue. We found that about
four in ten respondents felt favourably towards people from minority ethnic communities, whilst only seven percent expressed unfavourable attitudes. However, we also discovered that the majority of 16 year-olds greatly over-exaggerated the proportion of people from minority ethnic backgrounds actually living in Northern Ireland at the time, and we suggested that this could be related to their own perception of migrants, as well as how migrants are portrayed by the media.

For many years, policy intervention programmes in Northern Ireland have attempted to address prejudice and stereotyping through an increase of contact between Protestants and Catholics. Through interventions such as the programmes of the Community Relations Council and the introduction of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) in the Northern Ireland curriculum or youth programmes, groups of young people from different backgrounds have often been seen as key to the diminishing of violence. In ‘Cross-community integration and mixing – does it make a difference?’ we presented evidence that participation in cross-community schemes and attendance at planned integrated schools were positively related to how favourably young people from different socio-religious groups felt towards each other. Other findings presented in that publication related to the higher degree of pessimism among 16 year-olds in relation to community relations compared to the adult population, researched through NILT. This confirmed Fullerton’s findings discussed above which were based on the very first YLT survey undertaken in the new format in 2003.

The legacy of the Northern Ireland conflict

Only a very small minority of 16 year-olds are now personally exposed to actual political violence and paramilitary intimidation. The 2004 YLT survey showed that fewer than one in ten respondents had been threatened by a paramilitary group, injured in a sectarian incident or had been forced to move house because of paramilitary activities, whilst 30% of respondents said that a relative or close friend had been injured or intimidated in a sectarian incident. However, the YLT publications discussed here give evidence that today’s 16 year-olds who have grown up in largely peaceful times remain as divided along socio-religious lines as their parents’ and grandparents’ generations. Figure 1 shows that only between one and two out of ten 16 year-olds do not
identify as members of either the Catholic or Protestant community in Northern Ireland. In other words, this means that still between eight and nine out of ten respondents identify as members of the Catholic or Protestant community, whether they are regular church goers or not.

**Figure 1: Respondents saying they belong to NEITHER the Catholic NOR the Protestant community in Northern Ireland**
(by religious identity of respondents and YLT survey year)

YLT also recorded respondents’ preferences in terms of living in a mixed-religion neighbourhood, working in a mixed-religion workplace and sending their children to a mixed-religion school. Unsurprisingly, respondents who were neither Catholic nor Protestant were most likely to prefer mixed-religion environments. Catholics were least likely to want their children educated in mixed-religion schools. Protestants, on the other hand, were least likely to want to live in mixed-religion neighbourhoods. Overall, the results show that whilst the support for mixing and integration among 16 year-olds is significantly higher than the actual provision of mixed-religion places (e.g.: approximately one in ten respondents in each survey year said that they attended schools that were about half Protestant and half Catholic, but more than four in ten YLT respondents would like to send their children to mixed-religion schools), there is also a significant minority of young people who would prefer to grow up and work in single-religion environments (Figure 2).
Interestingly, a comparison of the YLT and NILT surveys shows that 16 year-olds were significantly less likely than the adult respondents to support mixed environments (Table 1). Whilst methodological disparities in the surveys may have contributed to the difference in responses, the results from the YLT surveys certainly suggest that there are future challenges for reconciliation work in Northern Ireland. However, recorded levels of explicit antipathy towards members of other socio-religious communities were low. Respondents were asked how favourable or unfavourable they felt towards Catholics and Protestants (2003-2006) and only around one in ten respondents expressed antipathy.

**Table 1: NILT and YLT respondents, by survey year, saying they prefer mixed-religion environments**

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Overall, YLT respondents remain convinced that religion will always make a difference to how people in Northern Ireland feel about each other. Protestants were more likely to have this view than Catholics and respondents with no religion (Figure 3). Many comments from young people confirmed this view, for example:

*I don’t think relations between Catholics and Protestants will ever really improve because religious prejudices are passed down from parents to their children. Religious hatred is not a natural thing: it is not in-born, it is created by people.* (YLT respondent, 2005)

**Figure 3: Respondents saying that religion will always make a difference to how people in Northern Ireland feel about each other (by religious background and survey year)**

What now?

So, where do we go from here? What has YLT to offer for further reconciliation work in Northern Ireland?

First of all, it is important to highlight that YLT is a research, rather than a participatory project, and so perhaps its direct relevance to improving community life and relations is not immediately obvious. Having said that, research has several important roles within the community relations field. The purpose of a research project like Young Life and Times is in the first instance to monitor changes in attitudes and behaviour, and to articulate and communicate these. We feel that YLT has succeeded in this. One way of measuring this is via the traffic that the YLT website – one of the main ways we use to publicise results – attracts. Currently (in Spring 2007), there are approximately 17,000 monthly hits to the YLT website, more than ten times
the number of hits recorded at the end of the first Peace II project year. It is unlikely that all interest in YLT is Northern Ireland policy-related or community-relations-related. However, we are confident that we have achieved the aim of the project, i.e. to increase research knowledge and to contribute to policy-making on community relations. In order to continue to do this over the longer term, YLT has to continue to listen to young people themselves and also develop. One obvious way we have done this is by asking respondents for their suggestions for the following year’s survey, and by using these suggestions. For example, questions relating to people from minority ethnic communities have been included based on respondents’ suggestions (this is discussed later in this article).

In terms of policy-making in the area of community relations, the YLT surveys provide evidence of the continuous existence of an ‘us-and-them’ categorisation between Catholics and Protestants. Looking at the results of the YLT data so far, this is likely to be the case for many years to come. If anything, the election results in the previous decade since the peace process began showed a polarisation of opinion. It will be interesting to see if the new Northern Ireland Executive (in which for the first time in May 2007 political parties at the extreme ends of political opinion agreed to share power) will shape political opinions and attitudes. In the past, many YLT respondents saw the reluctance of DUP and Sinn Féin to cooperate as one of the major obstacles to the Peace Process. Looking at some of the quotes retrospectively, some 16 year-olds were astonishingly insightful.

**Politically people are polarising. The DUP and Sinn Féin will soon be the target parties, [and] this can only lead to a deterioration in community relations.** (YLT respondent, 2003)

**There will be constant arguing in Northern Ireland until the politicians grow up and start to talk to each other. I don’t think that the two main communities will ever truly get along but I think they will grow to tolerate each other. As long as there are extremists who don’t want change, for example Ian Paisley, there will be no peace. There will be no political change because Catholics will still vote for the Nationalists and Protestants for the Unionists. As the population is fairly balanced these parties will have an equal share. The DUP need to stop using the IRA for the reason they don’t want to share power with Sinn Féin. I believe that the politicians should not get paid until they come to an agreement. They are getting money for doing nothing.** (YLT respondent, 2003)

**I feel that a step to peace in Northern Ireland would be that people will have to compromise. E.g. DUP - Sinn Féin.** (YLT respondent, 2004)
Until there is a party that will represent a peaceful and 50/50 type of community in Northern Ireland community relations will never reach the potential that is there in Northern Ireland... DUP and Sinn Féin MPs are holding community and relations back! (YLT respondent, 2004)

A further key finding of the YLT surveys with direct policy and practice relevance is that social policy interventions can have a positive impact on the relations between Catholics and Protestants. Community relations projects, mixed and integrated schooling and integrated neighbourhoods were all found to be significantly associated with the friendship patterns of respondents and with their attitudes towards the ‘other side’. Those respondents who experienced mixed-religion schools and neighbourhoods have developed friendships across the socio-religious divide which will potentially last into adulthood. The fact that participation in cross-community school projects was also positively correlated with cross-community friendship patterns outside the school environment is a particularly encouraging finding, considering that previous school-based cross-community initiatives such as the EMU programme had received a lot of criticism. Again, we received a number of comments from respondents that related to this:

Going to an integrated school changed my views on different religions. I was able to find out what people from different religions were like for myself. There should be more integrated schools. (YLT respondent, 2003)

[I] think that everyone should mix with each other without any violence. I went to a mixed religion school for 5 years and never saw any fights over religion. I wish it could just be the same outside school. (YLT respondent, 2003)

More mixed estates and schools for both religions to live in and attend. It would help community relations. I attended a mixed primary school and have lived in a mixed area for 8 years and would not have it any other way. (YLT respondent, 2005)

There will always be trouble in Northern Ireland. Most people are not open minded and judge others too soon. Projects [such as] "the Ulster project", a Christian cross-community project, helped me to change my outlook on others... If only more people could have this opportunity. (YLT respondent, 2006)

However, as stated before, a significant minority of YLT respondents would prefer single-religion environments, had bad experiences of community relations projects or were generally in doubt about the purpose and effectiveness of such initiatives:
The reason [why] I would want to send my children to a Catholic school is because I think mixed schools would mean children would receive less religious education and this would be wrong as religion is already becoming less important in day to day life. (YLT respondent, 2003)

When I went to Primary School we had to take part in cross community events. We knew to be respectful towards them. And we weren't allowed to wear football jerseys of any sort. However, they were very disrespectful towards us, wearing Rangers jerseys and Union Jack flags. Also calling us names. My class got defensive and shouted back. The 3 years of events were failures! This is why I feel I have no time for people from the Protestant community. I think that all children should go to an integrated primary school. This way you know no difference. (YLT respondent, 2005)

What community relations? No amount of money-grabbing cross community projects will unite two sides blissfully ignorant of any progress. Even if the two sides were somehow magically reunited, people would find something else to stir up trouble about. (YLT respondent, 2003)

One of the ways in which YLT tries to be sensitive towards changes in society and young people’s lives is to ask respondents each year if there is anything else they want to say about community relations in Northern Ireland and if they have any suggestions of questions we should be asking next year’s respondents. One of the issues that has increasingly emerged from respondents’ questions is that of relations to minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland. More and more respondents each year commented that they were concerned about increasing racism in Northern Ireland or expressed difficulties in dealing with inward migration:

Recently I've noticed also some people being shockingly racist and acting like it was acceptable. I think many people in NI are becoming increasingly resentful towards foreign immigrants, using excuses like 'they are taking our jobs' to cover up a previously unknown, deep-seated racism inside themselves. (YLT respondent, 2003)

With more Asians, etc. now in Northern Ireland, something has to be done to increase relations here. Some people are surprised to see someone from Pakistan sitting on a bus. Relations should be increased so these people sitting on a bus could be seen as a normal thing or less intimidating. (YLT respondent, 2006)

My community [is] mostly white, but very recently a few Polish and Lithuanian people have moved to the community... I have not yet met any of them (none are of my peer group, etc.) so I have not had a lot of experience with ethnic minorities within a community. I would only be bothered about relatives marrying those from different ethnic and minority groups because of issues such as religion of the children, country they would live in, etc. (YLT respondent, 2006)
Relations to minority ethnic communities is, we believe, a dimension of community relations, which presents a longer-term challenge for community relations work and reconciliation and thus needs to be addressed and funded via appropriate projects in communities and schools. In order to aid this process and work, we have included a number of new questions on relations to and perceptions of minority ethnic communities in recent YLT surveys. We have also amended traditional ‘closed’ response questions in order to gain a better understanding on how respondents define their own ethnic background. In doing this, YLT is contributing to the decade-long debate on what the Northern Ireland conflict is all about, i.e. whether it is religious, social, ethnic, historic, or is, in fact, a conglomeration of all of these.

The data presented in this article show that 16 year-olds were more pessimistic about community relations in the future than the Northern Ireland adult population and they were also less likely to support mixed environments in school, work and residential neighbourhoods. Because attitudes are known not to conclusively instigate actions, at this point it is impossible to say whether or not the 16 year-olds of today will actually live in a Northern Ireland that is more or less divided than it is now. So far, there is a greater demand for community relations projects and integrated schooling than there are facilities and opportunities for young people to meet and integrated schools. There is good reason to believe that with the continuous availability of social policy interventions young people may live in a more shared society in Northern Ireland in the future, but there are equally good arguments that significant minorities of young people will choose not to mix. Perhaps it is also time to realise that this is common to many other peaceful societies. With that in mind, maybe we can conclude that Northern Ireland is on its way to become such a diverse society itself.
Notes

References


A Sustainable Peace?

Research as a Contribution to Peace Building in Northern Ireland
Troubled Youth:
Young People, Violence and Disorder

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Periods of political transition are inevitably times of uncertainty and change. For some the focus is on the hopes and expectations of the future, while others are more comfortable with dealing with the certainties of the past. The transition from violent conflict to a more peaceful and stable democracy is rarely smooth, progress is not inevitable, and at times there may be a possibility of a return to open conflict. One of the legacies of all violent conflicts is that the use of force and the recourse to violence lingers as an option. It may remain as a means of pursuing political aims and objectives, as a response to fear and threat, and may be accepted as a legitimate approach or response in a range of contexts and situations. Northern Ireland’s transition from armed conflict to peaceful democracy occurred while attempts were being made to resolve conflicts in South Africa and the Middle East. In South Africa the transition to democracy was made with some success, but with a legacy of a dramatic rise in violent crime involving disenfranchised and alienated young men. In the Middle East the transition from conflict between Israel and Palestine completely collapsed into another cycle of armed violence.

In Northern Ireland the political transition has been marked by recurrent periods of public violence and disorder in many urban communities. Much of this has been associated with disputes over parade routes, rivalries with neighbouring territories or tensions with the police. But as well as these forms of violence, which can largely be considered as a direct legacy of the wider Troubles, there has also been a growing awareness of other forms of violence that, whilst not so readily associated with sectarian tensions, is no less a legacy of the conflict. The rise in racist and homophobic hate crime has in part been due to wariness and hostility shown towards the Catholic or Protestant ‘other’
over many years, while the prevalence of ‘punishment’ violence and the increase in organised and violent crime has been associated with the continued presence of paramilitary organisations in many areas.

There has also been a growing awareness of the prominence of young people as active agents in the rise in forms of violence. This includes their presence in many riots and disturbances, their role as perpetrators of many hate crimes, the growth of rioting as a social or ‘recreational’ activity, and concerns about an apparent increase in low level disorderly behaviour under the rubric of ‘anti-social behaviour’. Some of this activity is very much a legacy of the twenty-five years of armed conflict in Northern Ireland, but some of it is little different from the problems experienced in many other British and Irish urban areas, where young people have increasingly become seen as little more than a social problem. Earlier research has emphasised how young people’s perceptions of violence are shaped by local history, by parental and community influence, and by their own direct experiences of violence. Despite the peace process, violence remains an immediate experience (and memory) for many young people, and the association of religious identification with the threat of violence is strong. Young people thus continue to experience and produce violence at the micro level, and this violence comes in various forms: sectarian assaults, interface street fighting, rioting at marches and anti-social behaviour. All of these have a potential for escalation and help to legitimise the maintenance of exclusive sectarian communities for reasons of protection. Elements of this ‘culture of violence’ have subsequently passed into local communities and have become normalised and accepted. Although the sectarian element has become less prominent, the ‘craic’ has replaced it for many as the motivation for their activities.

This paper draws upon the findings of a research project carried out during 2003 and 2004 in a number of areas of North Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. The research focused on the role that young people played in forms of both intra and inter community disorder and violence, which primarily occurred within public spaces. The intention of the research was to engage with young people from different backgrounds and from a diversity of communities in order to explore their perspectives on the violence and to consider their understandings of the problems and their views towards forms of authority (whether this was the police or the paramilitary presence that many accepted as ‘normal’). It is worth noting that most of the discussions and comments on
young people and violence use the term ‘young people’ as a code for young men. It is young males who are seen as the primary problem, while young women’s involvement in disorder is largely ignored or minimised. While the ICR research focused on the activities of young men, it also explored the various roles that young women played in such disorder and found a diverse and varied range of roles and activities that indicated that young women are also active agents in the production of social disorder in many communities.3

The research was funded under Peace II Measure 2.1, whose headline aims were to address the legacy of the conflict, to explore the opportunities arising from peace, to develop processes of reconciliation and to improve community relations. The research viewed the experience, practice and recourse to violence as a direct legacy of the conflict, while the political transition provided an opportunity to confront this legacy as part of the process of reconciliation. More immediately, many communities acknowledged the importance of managing public disorder and limiting the scope for sectarian violence as a necessary factor in improving community relations and helping to embed the wider peace and consolidate the process of political transition. The first section of the paper provides an overview to the research and the subsequent sections will assess how the research contributed to the headline aims of Peace II, influenced policy and practice and offered recommendations about the long-term challenges for reconciliation work in Northern Ireland.

**Youth and Disorder**

The research in a number of different Catholic and Protestant communities in both Belfast and Derry/Londonderry found that in most areas there were problems both with forms of violence between members of the two main communities and violence involving young people within each of the communities. The inter-communal violence can most readily be classified as a form of sectarian disorder. It usually takes place at the interface or boundaries of residential communities, which in Northern Ireland are often marked by interface barriers or ‘peacelines’, flags and other markers of identity, and is often associated with the rising tensions of the marching season or other polarising anniversaries.4 But this disorder has increasingly taken on less politicised tones and often appears to have similarities with forms of gang related violence elsewhere, in which young people mark out or claim
territories and clash with rival groups in neighbouring areas.\textsuperscript{5} In some areas the violence was at times organised by the young people by mobile phone, apparently as a social event to relieve boredom. The ‘orange’ and ‘green’ dimension thus provides a distinctive local frame to a more common urban problem of youth disorder which is associated with alienation, disaffection and peer rivalries.

There was also evidence of a growing problem of less obviously sectarian violence. This included: recurrent disorder in Derry city-centre, usually late at night and involving people from different estates; violence and attacks outside pubs, clubs and other venues associated with the night time economy; and also a range of forms of low level disorder, fighting, vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour involving young people which took place within their own communities. In many cases the violence was associated with abuse of alcohol and/or various recreational drugs. Often it was linked with boredom and a perceived lack of available activities, things to do or places to go. In many cases the trouble was associated with young people who had limited money, little mobility and little apparent affection for their home environment or respect for their neighbours.

The conversations and interviews with the young people suggested a number of reasons why young people became involved in violence and disorder. These included a ‘tit for tat’ culture, in which attacks across an interface were carried out in response to previous violence from the other side. In this way violence could be sustained and perpetuated over a considerable period of time and could easily recur even after a break of some time in response to a relatively minor incident. Such violence had something of the characteristics of forms of feuding, in which each action demands a reaction. At times this can lead to an escalation in the scale of the trouble, which runs out of the control of the initial perpetrators. Intervention by outside agencies, whether by local adults or the police, can help to halt the cycle, but will do little to address the underlying tensions and social distance between the groups of young people that help to generate and sustain the trouble.

In some cases acts of violence or attacks on the other community were considered to be a justified reaction or an appropriate response to specific events, such as a parade, or to the presence of bonfires or flags in a neighbouring area. This was particularly the case if the activity was considered
to be deliberately provocative. But trouble could also occur in response to
events (typically a parade) further afield and which had no immediate impact
on the individuals but was regarded as a challenge to their wider community
of belonging. There was a feeling among some young people that it was their
role and their responsibility to physically defend their area or their culture
from attack or affront from members of the other community. Some of the
young people considered interface violence or attacks on police or the army as
part of the ongoing struggle for Irish unity, but others were less convinced of
any political rationale and instead described their participation in disorder as
simply a form of excitement, or something that provides a change from the
boredom of daily routines. It was no more than ‘a buzz’ or ‘good craic’.

The involvement of young people in interface violence can best be
described as the actions of young males acting in loosely formed associational
groups, with their actions focused on defending territory from neighbouring
areas (although sometimes attack was perceived to be the best form of
defence). However, while some consider the interface violence to be organised
and strategic, the young men rarely act as systematically organised units and,
although at times the violence has been encouraged or rationalised by adults
within their community, it is rarely under any formal paramilitary structure or
control. Previous research has highlighted the mixed signals from the adult
community, who might encourage such behaviour one minute but condemn it
the next, and have argued that it sends conflicting and confusing messages to
young people and at the same time helps to undermine any sense of adult
authority. We return to the subject of relationship with adult authority later.

Increasingly young people’s involvement in anti-social behaviour is
regarded in many communities and by many statutory agencies as a more
serious and growing problem as compared to sectarian interface violence. In
part this appears to be because interface violence is in many ways predictable,
because of its timing and location, and also because it can be more readily
policing and managed, either by the PSNI or by local communities. Anti-social
behaviour in contrast is more diffuse, unpredictable and less manageable.
Surveys by the Northern Ireland Policing Board have indicated that ‘young
people causing a nuisance’ is considered as the most significant problem after
domestic burglary and underage drinking across Northern Ireland, while many
police command units cite the activities of young people as the major source
of complaints.
Many of the young people acknowledged their involvement in low-level anti-social behaviour, including public drinking, vandalism and criminal damage. However, drinking was not perceived by the young people as a reasonable cause of annoyance. Rather, it was a means of passing the time and a way to socialise, although the young people admitted that such activities often resulted in litter, garbage, broken glass and general untidiness. Boredom was one of the prime reasons cited by young people for getting involved in anti-social behaviour, and for many young people complaints about their perceived anti-social behaviour exhibited a lack of empathy and understanding of their situation and an attempt to exert control over young people who may be ‘hanging around’ but who are doing nothing wrong. The young people made a distinction between the majority of their age group who just hung about around an area and did not get involved in any real trouble, and those smaller numbers of young people who were known to be involved in ‘heavier stuff’, which involved taking hard drugs or joy-riding. These more troublesome people were often identified as ‘hoods’, both by adults and by other young people. Some young people also self-identified as ‘hoods’ in what has been interpreted as a sign of defiance towards local adult authority, but it is unclear how far the notion of being a ‘hood’ is anything more meaningful than a label: a term for demonising young people perceived to be beyond the control of adult authority; a way of deflecting responsibility for damage and disorder to a more worthy ‘other’; or a badge of honour, whether earned or not.

**Violence and Authority**

One of the tensions that runs in parallel with problems of youth involvement in sectarian disorder and anti-social behaviour is the often antagonistic relationship between young people and the figures of authority in local communities. The PSNI is the key agency with responsibility for the management of public order, but its history and the role it has played over the duration of the Troubles has ensured that the PSNI is treated with suspicion and hostility in many working class communities, being regarded by many people as legitimate targets for violent attacks. The uncertainties of the political transition has also ensured an ongoing presence for the various paramilitary organisations, while the ambivalent attitudes towards the police in many areas have helped to create a space for figures within paramilitary
structures to take a more active role in dealing with problems of crime, disorder and social problems within their communities. The transitional period has until relatively recently been marked by a continuing problem of paramilitary ‘punishment’ activities and the exclusion or exiling of selected people. Young men were prominent among those targeted by paramilitary organisations for beating, shooting and exile from their communities.

Throughout the Troubles the understanding and perception of the police was viewed through orange or green prisms, and the reforms that underpinned the transition from the RUC to the PSNI focused on improving legitimacy and accountability of the police primarily to the Nationalist community. It is only recently that more attention has focused on relations between the police and other sections of local society and on the often antagonistic interaction between the police and young people.\(^8\) Research in Northern Ireland has consistently indicated that young people feel they are treated with little respect by the police and are frequently subjected to forms of harassment, including the use of physical violence and varieties of verbal abuse. For some young people the mere presence of police officers is considered as an act of provocation or intimidation.\(^9\) Although there is a specific Northern Irish dimension to this dynamic, one must acknowledge that relations between the police and young people are strained in many contemporary societies.

In interface areas the young people felt they were being victimised and often claimed that the police treated them more harshly than their equals in the other community. The sense of hostility towards the police meant that if the police arrived to break up a riot or prevent a disturbance the young people would readily attack them or their vehicles instead. In some cases the young people believed that the police deliberately provoked a situation to enable them to respond aggressively towards the young people, and this in turn led some to regard attacking the police as acceptable behaviour in some contexts. Many of those critical of the police could see no way in which the relationship could be improved or the cycle of mutual antagonism and violence could be broken. However, some police officers and some young people acknowledged that improvements could be evidenced through the work of ‘local’ community-based police officers in helping to prevent disorder, rather than reliance on the intervention by riot police who do not know the local context or people.
The interaction between paramilitaries and young people has been diverse. In some cases young people have been threatened or attacked because of their perceived involvement in crime or anti-social behaviour; in others they have been targeted for recruitment to the organisations. The paramilitary groups have also encouraged young people to participate in street violence at times of inter-communal tension. The more widespread of these interactions has been the targeting of low-level criminals for beatings, assaults, ‘exiling’ or ‘expulsion’. Our conversations indicated that the threat of a beating did act as a deterrent and created an atmosphere of fear among some young people. Even in areas where there was no overt paramilitary presence there was a perception that they were operating in the background, and thus still provided a threat. The fear instilled by paramilitaries was largely because they were known to have weapons and would be willing to use them. Young people were often aware of the ‘rules’ and procedures for carrying out punishment attacks, but they also said that sometimes no warning was given and an attack appeared to be no more than random violence. Some young people have exhibited rebellion or hostility towards the local paramilitaries, but even when punishment attacks were perceived to be unjustified any protest involved an extreme risk for the young people. Although the young people were generally hostile towards the paramilitaries because of the threat of violence they posed, there was also some ambivalence to their general presence. In particular, some young people still felt that they were necessary to protect the area from outside threat and that they thus ultimately contributed to a sense of safety and security. This view may in part reflect the varied roles that members of paramilitary groups played at different times and in different areas, but it also mirrors the role that some young people ascribed to themselves and thus reinforces a sense of the broad legitimacy of the use of force and violence.

In general, the relations between young people, the police and the paramilitary structures were not based on any sense of respect and trust, but rather on hostility, and were underpinned by the threat and the reality of the use of force and violence. Many of the young people appeared to accept a life in which intimidation, harassment and violence were the norm. They expected to be verbally harassed and chased by the police, and on occasion might be physically assaulted if they were caught. Equally they lived with the threat of physical violence from the local paramilitaries if they crossed certain boundaries of what has been considered to be acceptable behaviour. In such a
context it is unsurprising if the young people also regard violence as a means for them to negotiate relationships, defend their space and protect their social environment.

**Challenging Behaviour**

Many within the voluntary and community sector have become all too aware of the need to develop appropriate and effective responses to youth violence. Many youth and community workers felt there was a sense of inevitability that the young people would get involved when there was trouble at the interface. There was also a belief that in many communities rioting had become established as a multi-generational activity and that the young people did not get involved out of any real sense of choice. There was thus a resigned acknowledgement that once violence began (and there was also an assumption that there was an inevitability about the cyclical nature of urban violence in Northern Ireland) it was difficult to prevent the young people from joining in. However, there have been numerous projects and schemes established to manage key flashpoints and to deter young people from hanging around the interfaces. These include a range of diversionary activities, summer schemes and direct policing and intervention work. These were recognised by many youth and community workers to be relatively successful, even if they were primarily forms of damage limitation. However, people also acknowledged that the funding was limited and they would always struggle to provide diversionary activities that provide the same ‘buzz’ and ‘craic’ as rioting.

One recurrent complaint from young people was that, because they had few alternatives, they spent a lot of time on the streets, thus attracting adult attention and disapproval. In most areas young people complained of a lack of facilities and amenities, particularly ones that attempted to meet the needs of older teens. Too many venues closed too early, or focused on younger age groups, or did not have appropriate attractions or resources. Young people also felt that they were further constrained in their social options by a lack of money, and many also perceived themselves to be further limited in their movements by the highly segregated nature of the sectarian geography of most inner city and interface areas. The open spaces of the street and the park, the hard comfort of benches and bus shelters, the lights of shops and fast food vendors, the marginal areas of the interface, the wasteland and empty
buildings were thus spaces where they could gather and meet with some ease, which did not require money or travel, and which (for some time at least) was away from the gaze of the local adults and provided a space for making their own entertainment. But while such spaces offer some scope for socialising, as numbers gather youths become more disruptive and boisterous, or simply more threatening, and in turn they attract the attention of the police, the paramilitaries or other unwelcome adults.

Although some community workers acknowledged that the young people would respond positively if they were spoken to about their behaviour, others expressed a discomfort and even fear about confronting young people because of the possible consequences, which might include verbal abuse or even a physical threat. Some adults felt a sense of powerlessness when trying to engage with young people who were perceived to be troublesome, while at the same time insisting that something had to be done. Many expressed a sense of loss at what to do. There was also acknowledgment that representatives of statutory agencies, whether the police, the council or political parties, were often no more effective in dealing with young people involved in anti-social behaviour. Many adults admitted that they had no real authority over young people and that the young people had no respect for them as adults.

This view was replicated among many young people who expressed a belief that most adults did little to try to prevent interface violence or street disorder. Some noted that while parents may try to control the behaviour of their own children, other adults encouraged young people to get involved in disorder if it involved clashes with the other community. There was thus a blurring of boundaries about what forms of behaviour would be considered acceptable and which were not. Furthermore, young people argued that many of the adults were in no position to be critical of their actions as they were likely to have been involved in such activities themselves when they were younger, and even in the not so recent past. This generated a perception of adult hypocrisy whereby their involvement in rioting could be justified and rationalised, but violent young people were deviants and a threat. In general the young people felt that few adults attempted to see things from their perspectives, few were prepared to listen to them (with the exception of some dedicated staff at local youth-clubs) and generally adults expected young people to listen and respond to commands rather than engage in discussions or exchanges. The adults’ perspectives on young people and their behaviour
caused frustration among many young people, who believed that too many adults looked on all young people as potential trouble makers or as a threat, and in many cases all young people were made ‘scapegoats’ for the activities of a small minority.

Challenges for Reconciliation

There have been a number of policy initiatives that have aimed to address aspects of the legacy of the conflict and or the ongoing problems of violence and disorder, but it is questionable whether they have had much direct impact on the longer-term problems of young people’s involvement in violence and disorder. Three examples illustrate the difficulties that policy makers have had in addressing the inter-relationship between young people, violence and the sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland. The Dunlop Report, the first official review of repetitive interface violence, proposed a number of innovations to address the fragmented communities of North Belfast. These included a Centre for Citizenship and the creation of a Music Action Zone, which were designed to focus on the problematic role of young people in the disorder. However, although some of the report’s other recommendations have been adopted by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), these specific ideas have not been progressed.

More recently A Shared Future has also highlighted the problems of violence in interface areas and emphasised the need for a ‘combined short, medium and long term approach that is earthed in encouraging local dialogue and communication, the sharing of resources, [and] which is set in the wider context of social and economic renewal’. But the document does not make any specific recommendations in relation to the role of young people in sustaining such problems. The first Triennial Action Plan does not identify any initiatives that specifically relate to children and young people, but rather emphasised the need to work closely with communities on the ground. Finally Our Children and Young People, the ten year children and young people’s strategy from OFMDFM, identified an underpinning value for children of being ‘entitled to live in a peaceful and non-threatening environment’, but it was distinctly vague in identifying any targets or strategies that might address the complex patterns of behaviour that result from growing up in a society which had become inured to the use of force and where violence had become
a routinised fact of life. In reality many of the more effective responses that have been made to reduce the involvement of young people in inter and intra communal disorder have come from within the local community and voluntary sector, where a diverse range of diversionary activities, training and education programmes and dialogue projects have attempted to engage with the young people and re-focus their energies.

Conclusions

The ICR research highlighted the fact that that although Northern Ireland had nominally moved to a ‘post-conflict’ status, violence was still used as a means of dealing with social antagonism and young people were widely incorporated in the culture of violence that lingered in many communities. Despite the relative peace, suspicion and mistrust dominated many relationships, and these were sustained by polarisation, segregation and a lack of means of integration and dialogue. One of the disturbing legacies of the conflict is the acceptance of violence in many communities which helps to legitimise and condone the use of force too readily and in too many contexts. The following highlights some of the challenges that still have to be faced:

- There is an evident need to try to improve young people’s relationships within their communities, with adults, with service providers and among different groups of young people. The research indicated that the needs and concerns of young people were similar across the divide and in different areas. Although it has become something of a cliché to complain about a lack of facilities for young people, it is incumbent on statutory and community organisations to engage more effectively with young people and develop more appropriate approaches to address the needs of young people.

- The challenge remains to listen and not just implement programmes that adults think will work. Young people need to be empowered, more involved and included from an early stage in the design and the implementation of programmes and activities, rather than just have things offered or provided for them. This includes the challenge to find ways to involve young people in a wider range of activities in their communities, not merely those specifically focused on their age group.
• Many young people have contacts and friendships with people from the other community and expressed a willingness to develop cross-community contacts still further. With lower levels of interface violence there will be possibilities of extending such contacts. However, the challenge is to enable cross-community friendships to be sustained as a normal part of life, rather than just through special activities and events.

• Young people in many of the interface areas also need to be encouraged to look to education, training and employment as a means of moving beyond the often narrow confines of their home areas and beyond the defensive restrictions and practices that have been developed over the course of the conflict. The transition from violent conflict to peace needs to be translated into changes in personal daily routines. But the experience of the past decade has shown how difficult such processes can be.

The funding received from Peace II enabled this research to focus on the role that some young people have been playing in the violence and disorder that has continued since the ceasefire of 1994. Although the reasons for their involvement in violence are changing it was evident that while for some people sectarian motives remain dominant, for others the ‘Troubles’ is an increasingly distant memory. However, the legacy of conflict and violence remains. The ongoing violence and apparently increasing levels of anti-social behaviour have led adults in many communities to demonise the public presence of young people, which has served to further increase young people’s disdain for forms of authority. The legacy of the conflict remains an underlying factor, but in many ways Northern Ireland is increasingly having to come to terms with issues of intergenerational conflict and tension that are prominent in many other urban environments.
Notes

References


Breaking Down Barriers: Sectarianism, Unemployment, and the Exclusion of Disadvantaged Young People from Northern Ireland Society

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Introduction

In a period when Northern Ireland is moving out of conflict, opportunities for promoting social inclusion in the wake of economic regeneration are increased. In such an environment employment prospects are heightened, and the potential for enhanced inter-group relations through greater contact at work is increased. As a sector now facing new opportunities for growth and development, more young people from the two communities should be entering the workforce. The changing employment scene offers great potential benefits for stability and harmony across the divide. But what are the implications of this new scenario? How can employers be facilitated in promoting cross-community workplace recruitment and retention and maximising inter-community harmony at work?

This chapter presents the main findings and recommendations from a two-year qualitative research project focusing upon unemployed young adults from interface areas of Belfast. More specifically, the project investigated exclusion amongst young adults and its relationships to unemployment as a feature of sectarianism and the ongoing legacy of conflict. It aimed to identify barriers young people faced to securing employment and to recommend ways in which these barriers can be removed. Furthermore, it sought to chart ways of facilitating employers and work organisations in recruiting and retaining young employees, both Catholic and Protestant, from the minority community
in their areas through promoting harmonious cross-community relations in the workplace.

**Background to the study**

This research set out to chart the impact of this community apartheid on three main facets of life in Northern Ireland: unemployment, social exclusion and sectarianism. It is useful, therefore, to briefly review the existing literature in these three areas.

**Social Exclusion**

Social exclusion is a complex concept which has provoked considerable expatriation, but there is no consensus about the exact meaning of the term itself.\(^1\) As aptly described by Teague and Wilson\(^2\) ‘Social exclusion is a term that has gate-crashed the debate about the direction of social policy without paying the entrance fee of a definition’. Klasen\(^3\) argued that social exclusion is about the extent to which people have equal access to basic capabilities such as the ability to be healthy, well-fed, housed, integrated into the community, to participate in community and public life, and enjoy social bases of self-respect. In fact, the concept used to be, and still is to some extent, synonymous with poverty.\(^4\) This is perhaps not surprising, since it is a fact that the poor have more limited chances to fulfil their individual and social wishes.\(^5\) In general terms, social exclusion can be conceived of as detachment from the prevailing moral order or normative requirements of society.\(^6\) One such normative requirement is the provision of gainful employment. Yet throughout the European Union rates of unemployment among young people tend to be higher than for the general population, making this sector particularly vulnerable to social exclusion. In this sense, unemployment is a significant and frequently-cited predisposing factor for exclusion.\(^7\)

**Youth Unemployment**

Long-term unemployment may be viewed as both a symptom and a cause of social exclusion. It is also believed to be an important driver of other aspects of social exclusion, including poverty, homelessness, physical and mental ill health, drug misuse, lack of social capital and lack of transport.
Kemp argued that experience of substantial spells of unemployment carries a significant ‘wage penalty’ for young people in terms of subsequent employment. However, some purport that although unemployment may cause social exclusion, employment does not necessarily ensure social inclusion. Rather, Bailey noted that the impact of employment on poverty is of much more significance than that on exclusion. Others hold a different perspective. Martin argued that, ‘Full employment performs an integrative and social harmonising role: it promotes social inclusion, cohesion, citizenship and a sense of participation in the wider community’.

Unemployment tends to be concentrated among identifiable social groups. One of the perennial problems facing young people in Northern Ireland is that levels of unemployment are higher than the UK average. Entry to the labour market has been shown to be particularly difficult for young adults aged 18+. In 2006, approximately 4.4% of the population in Northern Ireland was unemployed, but the unemployment rate for young people aged 18-24 years was more than double, at 9%. Within the broader landscape of unemployment there lie specific problem areas. Geographically, unemployment is particularly prevalent in interface areas of Belfast. There is evidence that those from deprived areas and those with poor qualifications are more likely to experience difficulties in making the move from school to work, thereby placing these young people at increased risk of social exclusion. It is also this grouping that is particularly prone to over-representation in incidents of street violence and sectarianism.

Sectarianism

Sectarianism is a multi-faceted, complex phenomenon. Investigations into the concept take historic, theological, political, psychological, sociological or economic forms. Sectarianism has been defined as ‘a system of attitudes, actions, beliefs, and structures…which arises as a distorted expression of positive, human needs especially for belonging, identity and the free expression of difference…and is expressed in destructive patterns of relating’. Liechty and Clegg further highlighted how, as in Northern Ireland, sectarianism almost always has a religious determinant and usually comprises a conjunction of political and religious factors. In keeping with this perspective, McVeigh noted how sectarian problems between Protestants and Catholics were not
simply a matter of religion. Rather, these are symptomatic of divergent senses of culture, tradition, and belonging. In effect, they really have to do with ethnicity. Another important factor here is that sectarianism is not a solid rock of ideas and behaviours, but a fluid and moving stream flowing in line with changing social and historic events.

Segregation permeates much of the social fabric of Northern Ireland. Over 98% of public housing in the city of Belfast is segregated along religious lines; desegregated (integrated) schools educate only about 5% of the total school population; and issues of religion and national identity permeate many sports. When it comes to relationships, less than 10% of the population marry across the religious divide, and around 70% report that ‘all or most’ of their friends are of the same religion. Not surprisingly, these endemic divisions are reflected in sectarian attitudes and behaviour. Moreover, the barriers between the two sides sometimes take a physical form in the shape of ‘peace walls’ that divide communities in parts of Belfast. These walls in turn affect many elements of everyday life in interface areas. They also act as a major constraint upon available social and recreational activities. Furthermore, children are acculturated into this world of sectarianism from an early age, so that from the age of three years they are able to identify preferred ingroup symbols of identity. Similarly, 75% of young people admit to having behaved in a sectarian manner, attributing a combination of family background, sport, school, politics, media and personal experiences as the main reasons for their behaviour.

Sectarianism also blights the workplace. In 2000-2003 more than 500 people each year took grievances due to exposure to sectarianism at work. Research by Dickson and Hargie also showed that sectarianism was clearly a factor in all organisations and, for the most part, was perpetrated by workers on fellow workers. They found that violations of flags and emblems policies, including the daubing of graffiti, wearing of inappropriate items of clothing, and playing sectarian tunes (including via mobile telephone ring-tones), constituted by far the greatest source of offence. A raft of recent laws has been passed to legislate against sectarianism in the workplace. Yet, despite this legislation, sectarian incidents still occur. These reflect the schism in society. Despite the implementation of the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement, there are clear indications that relationships between the two communities have deteriorated rather than improved.
Thus, to sum up, young people living in interface areas of Belfast face what has been termed a double penalty. Not only do they face problems associated with poverty and unemployment, but also experience the effects of sectarianism, which further exacerbate the social exclusion to which they may be vulnerable.

**Methodology**

The study was formulated to investigate the exact nature of the problems faced by unemployed young people from interface areas in Belfast. In particular it was designed to examine how and in what ways young people could overcome the barriers to employment across the divide. The key objectives were:

1. To document and profile three groups of young people (never employed, once employed but now unemployed, currently employed) in Belfast, aged 16-24 years, exploring social exclusion and what those in interface areas perceive to be barriers to employment.

2. To investigate differences across groups in terms of employment-seeking, together with positive and negative experiences of employment.

3. To explore barriers to employment and inclusion, including *inter alia*, perceived and actual incidents of sectarian harassment, community and familial pressures, issues of threat, and organisational culture.

4. To investigate the views of employers and trade union officials with respect to current employment procedures and practices in organisations and their impact upon the recruitment and retention of young people across the sectarian divide.

5. To capture the views, opinions and experiences of those who work closely with unemployed young people in fulfilling a formal training or community work role in relation to sectarianism, unemployment and social exclusion.
Data was gathered from five groups, and in all, a total of 198 participants were interviewed as follows:

Group 1 - Young people from interface areas of Belfast who had never been employed (n=51)
Group 2 - Young people from interface areas of Belfast who were employed (n=60)
Group 3 - Young people from interface areas of Belfast who were unemployed but were once employed (n=35)
Group 4 - Employers and Trade Union Officials (n=27)
Group 5 - Community Group leaders and Training Providers (n=25)

A qualitative research methodology was employed in order to achieve an in-depth and multi-layered understanding of the influences that sectarianism may have on such young people in searching for and retaining employment. In order to do so, unemployed and employed young people from interface areas of all parts of Belfast were interviewed in order to chart their first-hand experiences of work and life. To obtain a full picture of the issues facing young people, the perceptions and perspectives of some of the key players with whom they have contact were also elicited. Thus, interviews were conducted with employers, trade union officials, community group leaders and training providers, who had direct experience of dealing with young people from interface areas.

The interviews were semi-structured and deep-probe in design in order to allow the interview to flow, while at the same time ensuring that all research questions/issues were covered. The advantage of the deep-probe interviews used in this study is that they elicit detailed accounts of actual experiences described by participants. This method helps to elicit unanticipated information as well as documenting in detail the personal meanings attached to experiences. It is grounded, context rich, and by searching for themes across data, produces findings that have broader applicability. It enables the researcher to integrate strategy, context and outcomes, to examine recurring patterns and to develop a detailed picture of the situations under focus. Questions were developed from the literature, and separate interview schedules were developed for each of the five groups.
Part of the interview was structured around critical incidents concerning experiences of sectarianism. The Critical Incident Technique (C.I.T.) is now widely employed in communication research,\textsuperscript{37} since it produces ‘insight into key areas of both good and dysfunctional performance’.\textsuperscript{38} Each participant was asked to discuss in detail any sectarian incident he or she had been involved with or witnessed while in employment. The purpose here was to chart the prevalence of such incidents, the nature of frequently recurring incidents, how they were dealt with and the effect on those involved. All interviews were transcribed and inputted into NVivo, the chosen qualitative software tool for data management and content analysis.

Results
This section presents the key findings pertaining to each of the five groups of participants.

Community Groups and Training Providers

Community group and training provider representatives indicated that perceived neutrality in the workplace and in the local environment (i.e. no graffiti, no flags) was important in encouraging young people to venture into other areas to seek work. Furthermore, this group believed that young people were more likely to travel through an outgroup area to work if they were travelling as part of a group.

Alcohol and drug abuse were raised as problems in interface areas, with associated high levels of stress and suicide. The many, varied, pervasive and dysfunctional influences of paramilitary groups were highlighted, together with their control of the black-market economy. Sectarianism was revealed as the norm in these communities and a major barrier to employment. It was felt that sectarianism had increased since the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement, and that the communities had become more polarised.

Most of the respondents believed that unemployed young people were socially excluded and that unemployment was an important contributory factor. It was also felt that some young people excluded themselves through lack of effort to become involved with much of what happens in their
community. High levels of pessimism were expressed with regard to employment integration across the divide in the foreseeable future. The majority view of the respondents was that most young people wanted to work, despite the fact that being unemployed was a normal, expected part of life in their sub-culture. It was felt by all that unemployment was too high and job opportunities too scarce in what were very deprived areas, and that greater inward investment was essential.

One reason given for unemployment was a failing education system (this was especially marked in Protestant working class estates where few young people gained qualifications). There was a vicious circle whereby unemployed young people would have to travel to what were poorly paid jobs but could not afford the associated travel costs. The benefits trap also militated against employment-seeking by fostering dependency. Respondents believed that most young people would not want to go into an area of a different religion to work, with only a small minority of those interviewed believing that they would be willing to do so.

In the opinion of community group personnel and training providers, the main reason for young people not working in a politico-religious outgroup area was fear of attack.

There was also a fear of the unknown as each side knew very little about the other or indeed the geographical area from which they came. Sectarianism was therefore believed to be a major factor in shaping their applications for and subsequent uptake of jobs. Almost all the respondents thought that young people would be willing to work with the politico-religious outgroup in what was perceived to be ‘neutral’ parts of the city, providing that co-religionists were also working there.

Never-Employed Young People

The never-employed young people struggled to offer suggestions as to what could be done to encourage more to take jobs in outgroup areas. There were few suggestions that gained large support but some that were mentioned included removing flags and emblems of politico-religious allegiance, concealing one’s identity while there, and there being a greater police presence in those parts of the city.
These young people generally held a negative perception of the areas in which they lived. The educational attainment of the respondents was relatively low and perceptions of the education system were largely unfavourable. Interestingly, they did not, for the most part, perceive unemployment as leading to social exclusion, nor did they regard themselves as being excluded. That said, they tended to define social exclusion in very concrete terms of not having friends, being bored and having nothing to do, none of which they believed applied to them. There was a view that unemployment was ‘normal’ in the deprived areas in which they lived.

Participants were divided over willingness to work in an area that was dominated by people from a different religious background. Of those who stated an unwillingness to work in such places the main reason cited was fear, and more specifically, fear of physical attack. For those who stated that they would be prepared to work in outgroup areas the value of having a job transcended the location of the place of work and associated risk. A large majority of the respondents stated their willingness to work in neutral areas.

**Once-Employed Young People**

This group were out of work when recruited to take part in the research but had previous work experience. The vast majority of participants had left school at the age of 16, many with minimal educational qualifications. Most wanted to work and were actively seeking employment. Only one from this group admitted to not wanting a job. Almost all had worked in mixed areas with people from other religious denominations and were quite evenly divided over whether they would be prepared to work in an area dominated by the politico-religious outgroup. Fear of physical attack, lack of identification with the host community, influence of upbringing, and remuneration being an insufficient incentive were all mentioned by those not willing to work in an outgroup area. The value of having a job appealed to those, on the other hand, prepared to find employment in parts of the city dominated by those from a different religious persuasion.

For many, contemplating working in an outgroup area was conditional upon not being harassed, not having their religious background identified, and the job being short-term. As with the never-employed group, working in a mixed workforce in a neutral area was acceptable. Most of the work-based
sectarian incidents that they reported involved either verbal or physical abuse. The flaunting of flags and emblems also featured prominently in their experiences of sectarianism. In most cases, these sectarian incidents at work were not reported to management.

On balance, most felt that sectarianism stood in the way of finding employment. The group was evenly divided over unemployment being a cause of social exclusion. Negative consequences of unemployment, such as lack of money and lack of respect from adults, were mentioned as contributing to social exclusion among the unemployed. The fact that they still had strong social networks of friends was given as a reason, on the other hand, for not regarding the unemployed as marginalized. Further cross-community work and the removal of flags and graffiti from ghettoised areas were suggested as ways of encouraging young people to move across the city’s politico-religious interfaces to find work.

**Young Employed People**

The majority of young people in this group had acquired previous work experience before starting their current full-time position. The group was predominantly optimistic and enthusiastic about future careers, and most were already proactively pursuing longer-term career objectives. A sizeable number intended to stay with their present employer.

A significant minority of the group had their first encounter with the politico-religious outgroup in their current workplace. The prevailing attitude espoused towards those from a different community background was essentially positive. These young people were at pains not to be thought of as bigoted, and they described their family influences as important in this respect, although peers were often regarded as being sectarian.

Bigotry and the threat of intimidation were particularly prevalent in determining the areas of Belfast in which these young people would consider working. The vast majority indicated that they would be selective with regards to which part of Belfast they would be prepared to work in. For most, travelling through the surrounding district in an area perceived to be the territory of the other religious grouping, either Protestant or Catholic, posed a
bigger threat than the actual worksite itself, which was thought to afford some level of protection.

Most of the group had either witnessed or experienced serious sectarian violence or abuse in the community, with one-third being personally affected either directly or indirectly through a member of the family. As far as the workplace was concerned, those incidents that did emerge were set against a backdrop of what was reported to be essentially good cross-community relations at work. The most frequent type of sectarianism involved verbal sectarian offence. In many cases these incidents were not brought to the attention of management and for a variety of reasons, including fear of being branded ‘a tout’ (i.e. an informer), or being seen as incapable of ‘standing up for oneself’. Other forms of sectarianism included violence, intimidation, displays of flags and emblems, graffiti, management policies and exclusion by peers.

Work was regarded as a place where sectarian viewpoints, trappings and influences should not be allowed to intrude. Topics marking politico-religious difference were not thought to be suitable for workplace conversation, but a small minority held the contrary view that such important matters should be taken up with co-workers. That said, a strong sense of not wanting to offend anyone pervaded much of what the group had to say about their interactions at work.

Most young people did not believe that management had facilitated good community relationships in the workplace, with some even questioning whether this was a desirable management function. A view was advanced that the positive work environment experienced had evolved organically, tended and nurtured by the workers themselves, rather than being imposed from the top through management initiatives. Management was held to have been aware of two-thirds of sectarian incidents reported but intervened in less than half. In some cases this was attributed to an unwillingness to confront the sectarianism in their organisation, in others the belief was that there was little that could have been done to put a stop to it.

Almost all the participants were adamant that they were not socially excluded. Occasional references to feelings of exclusion were based in the context of distancing themselves from pressures to comply with extremist
views in their own community, thereby placing restrictions on contacts and places to socialise. The majority of these young people who experienced a robust sense of social inclusion expressed two main reasons: financial independence afforded by employment and strong social networks.

Public and Private Sector Employers and Trade Union Officials

Running contrary to the findings from the young people, most of the employer representatives claimed that there was no evidence of sectarianism in their organisations. Around half of the employer representatives indicated that discussions of a political nature did occasionally take place in their organisations, but most further stated that these discussions would be managed so as not to offend. Few of the interviewees had first hand experience of serious sectarian incidents; most of the serious incidents that were described in the interviews were recounted by the trade union representatives.

All the employer organisations had written policies in place to deal with sectarian incidents should they arise. In addition to dissemination of written policies, the employers cited several other actions taken to prevent sectarianism, such as engendering a teamwork ethos and rotating staff breaks. All the employers indicated that they actively promoted equality of opportunity and asserted that this was most in evidence in their recruitment practices. Both the trade union and employer representatives raised many factors that inhibited recruitment from interface areas, such as the existence of the black economy together with skills and education inadequacies amongst the young. Employers had no deliberate policies proactively targeting recruitment from interface or disadvantaged areas.

Various conceptualisations of social exclusion were proffered by the respondents with several facets of these definitions related to the issue of employment and the workplace. A large majority of the participants additionally perceived a direct relationship between unemployment and social exclusion.
Summary

In sum, it was found that sectarianism placed restrictions on the job opportunities presented to young people in Belfast and was regarded, particularly by community workers and training providers, as a significant factor in heightened levels of unemployment amongst this age group. The perceived relationship between unemployment and social exclusion was more complex. While community group personnel and training providers saw a direct relationship between these two variables, the young people, and paradoxically those who had never been employed, were less convinced. For them, social exclusion was defined narrowly in terms of having friends and not being bored. Those participants who were employed, or had previously been so, recounted incidents of sectarianism at work that mainly took the form of verbal abuse. Much of this was not reported to management. Indeed, managements’ views of their workplaces were of spaces where sectarianism found little hold.

Recommendations

Recommendations emanating from the research fall under a number of themes, as highlighted below:

Government policy

The study concludes that current government policy aimed at helping young people enter employment in Northern Ireland falls short on a number of issues. It is recommended that government schemes take cognisance of wider societal issues associated with young people, social inclusion and employment and give consideration to how young people can be reached during the school-to-work transitional years.
Recruitment

There was general consensus that employers, particularly sizeable employing organisations, have a responsibility to take proactive measures to recruit from both communities. That said, the findings would warn that positive discrimination in this respect should be carefully handled. If a concerted approach is made to a particular section of the community it may be resented by other potential, or even current, employees who may sense favouritism or unfairness.

Support was received for the concept of taking a recruitment initiative straight to the community. This was regarded as demonstrating a commitment to attract prospective employees from that area. The study highlighted the potential for a ‘ripple effect’ – once employees from a certain community are in place, others from the area tend to follow.

The study highlighted the issue of transportation and travel, and it is suggested that consideration be given to the provision or promotion of transport (for example, encouraging a lift-share scheme amongst employees) from a perceived ‘neutral’ area that would facilitate employees from all sections of the community.

Retention

In the context of the overlapping issues of sectarianism, social exclusion and unemployment, retention as well as recruitment of young people emerged as key issues for consideration. The findings revealed that some employers fail to recognise the existence and impact of sectarianism upon the workforce. Employers have a duty under fair employment legislation to protect employees from sectarian behaviour, yet appear to distance themselves from the day-to-day reality of who regulates sectarianism and how. It is contended here that employers ought to recognise that sectarianism remains a fixture within Northern Ireland society and its workplaces. It is not a negative reflection, nor a sign of failure on the part of any company’s policies and procedures, to acknowledge its existence.
The study points to the role of training courses as a way of recognising sectarianism and identifying the best means of redressing concerns. Trade Unions, with specific expertise in dealing with sectarianism, are also highlighted as useful sources of guidance in this respect.

While formalised management procedures are necessary for the identification and management of workplace sectarianism, it also emerged that informal and organic means of dealing with this issue are just as important. Subtle facilitation of structures that allow for relationships to develop as employees get to know each other appear to be more effective than simply ‘ordering’ young people to get along.

**Project Impact**

On completion of the study upon which this chapter was based, a full report of findings and an accompanying executive summary were prepared by the research team. The report was published by the University of Ulster and each participating organisation received a copy. The report was officially launched at a presentation delivered by the project team to a group of invited guests at the Community Relations Council in November 2006.

In conjunction with the report launch a press release was prepared and issued by the University of Ulster’s Public Affairs department. The press release highlighted key findings and recommendations that emanated from the study and it appeared on the University's web page as well as being circulated to media and press outlets, some of whom featured the project in their respective publications.

Since the launch of the report the research team has received many requests for the report from a range of interested parties. As well as personnel from various community based groups, these parties have included a representative from a trade union umbrella body who expressed an intention to integrate the findings from the study into training delivered to trade union representatives and an employee of an organisation dealing with issues relating to children and young people in Northern Ireland. In addition, other individuals pursing research in this area have been making use of the study from a methodological point of view, as well as drawing upon the actual findings discerned by the project.
The results of the study have been disseminated at an international Communications conference in Australia and plans are afoot to prepare a number of research papers for submission to academic journals – articles which would be accessed by an international audience.

Since completion of this study the research team has embarked upon a new project which is entitled ‘Learning to Deal with Difference in the Workplace: An Investigation of Formal and Informal Processes’. This research is funded by the Community Relations Council through the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland (the Peace II Extension). This study draws upon and develops a key theme emerging from this project. As stated earlier in the chapter, this study found that with respect to the young employed people who participated in the study the most frequent type of sectarianism encountered in the work place was that of offence caused by inappropriate verbal communication. However, it was also underlined that these young people felt that such manifestations of sectarianism could be best managed by the workers themselves. It was revealed through the study that boundaries seem to exist that separate acceptable practice from unacceptable practice, and that these boundaries are defined by more than company regulation alone. What these boundaries are and how they are developed was not fully understood. The research team’s present study seeks to investigate this phenomenon more fully and will endeavour to establish the relationship between formal and informal organisational processes in respect to managing difference.
Notes

References


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Conclusion

After the flood: picking up the pieces and building a shared future?

Duncan Morrow, Community Relations Council

The roots of our antagonism

Measured on a global scale, conflict in Ireland was never explicable in terms of simple material deprivation. Taken in the round, we have not been especially poor, we were not uneducated, we did not suffer from the barriers to entry in the market faced by those who do not speak English or who suffer discrimination on the basis of colour. Land ownership in Ireland reflected the reforms of the nineteenth century, whereby tenants in general purchased their own farms, rather than the Anglo-Scottish pattern of great landowners, tenant farmers and smallholders. As part of the British Empire, industrialisation came early to eastern Ulster.

At a political level, democratic self-organisation has roots as deep as those anywhere in Western Europe and certainly as deep as those in other parts of Britain and Ireland. Nor was the north of Ireland unique in its history of colonisation or Empire. All of Ireland was under the Crown, and post-Jacobite highland Scotland experienced a political and economic suppression at least as comprehensive and ruthless as that of Ireland.

The question of ‘the causes of conflict’ in the north of Ireland must therefore probe past pure or absolute measures of wealth or development or political organisation, into the subtle and antagonistic relationships which underlay surface material progress. Taken at its most basic, the expansion of the power of ‘Britain’ onto the island of Ireland, underpinned by religious
divisions which set economic and political events within a sacred frame, left a
distinctive legacy on the area known as Ulster. As the Home Rule crises from
the end of the nineteenth century made clear, politics had evolved into a
confrontation between an overwhelmingly Catholic nation seeking self
government and a united Protestant front seeking security from ‘Rome rule’
through Westminster and the continuation of the integral Union between
Britain and Ireland.

Already prior to World War One, there were clear indications that any
show-down on this matter might be violent and bitter. Events during the war
and immediately thereafter ensured that it would be. The consequences for the
province of Ulster were cataclysmic. The three most clearly Catholic counties
– Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal – were assigned to the south, cut off from
their traditional capital and labour markets in Belfast and Derry. The other six
counties were incorporated into Northern Ireland. While Northern Ireland
remained within the United Kingdom, local government was devolved to a
new Parliament. What actually took place in 1920 was anticipated by neither
Unionist nor Nationalist in 1914. Inside Northern Ireland, the result was to
institutionalise the divisions of pre-War Ireland under a Westminster system
which led, under the conditions of the six counties, to permanent government
by one side of the antagonism over the other. Antagonism was now always
potentially polarisation. Paradoxically, the effect was also to insulate Britain
from further engagement in Irish affairs and, ultimately, to create real distance
between the north and the rest of island of Ireland.

When violence re-emerged in earnest in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s
and early 1970s, both Britain and Ireland re-engaged with the internal affairs
of Northern Ireland from a position of relative ignorance. As violent crisis
compounded crisis in 1971 and 1972, both states moved rapidly towards a
policy of containment rather than confrontation. The impact of these decisions
is too complex to explore in a short chapter, but three features are of direct
relevance to the emergence of a peace programme. Firstly, the answer to
Northern Ireland’s problems from as early as 1973 was understood to include
real power-sharing, inter-governmental co-operation and moves to end
discrimination and inequality. Secondly, the adopting of containment rather
than escalation as the core of strategy meant that explosive violence was
limited and replaced instead with a long war of attrition. The consequences
were far from straightforward, however. While violence was ultimately
exhausted and exposed as circular and strategically pointless, social division had time to sink even deeper roots into Northern Irish society, structuring division into the very sinews of what passed for normality. Thirdly, containment meant Britain and Ireland turning their collective backs on Northern Ireland, which was to be treated as ‘a place apart’. By far the greatest consequences of this were felt in the counties of the Irish Republic bordering on Northern Ireland, including the three ‘detached’ counties of Ulster and the immediately bordering areas of North Leinster and Connacht. Although physically straddled across the middle of the island, these counties found themselves on the periphery of a containment system.

Once the decisions began to be made about bringing conflict to an end in Northern Ireland, the structural legacy was stark and had political, economic and social dimensions. In political terms, the legacy was a battle over cause: did the cause of conflict lie in the creation of Northern Ireland by Britain, and by extension in British colonisation as republicans would have it, or in the refusal of republicans, and later loyalists, to conform to normal democratic norms and instead to resort to murderous and criminal campaigns of violence, as Unionists maintained? Above all, in a context where so much bile and blood had been spilt for so long, how could government ever be established across this cleft, especially when political parties were overwhelmingly organised to prosecute antagonism and defend ‘one side’ rather than generate social cohesion and integration between all parties. In economic terms, it was clear that Northern Ireland had been kept afloat only by massive public subsidy and a seriously unbalanced dependence on the public sector. The southern border counties could also clearly demonstrate that the impact of violence in the north had had a detrimental effect on their economic development. Furthermore, there was little chance of attracting significant investment unless the violence of the past could be shown to be definitively over, and not merely temporarily set aside. In social terms, Northern Ireland was plagued by segregation and division at every level, by the impact of containment, which led directly to very variable experiences of violence between those who had experienced its direct impact and those who had been protected by security policy and engineering, and by the emigration of a significant number of the brightest and best to other economies.
Peace and the PEACE programmes

The peace process, sometimes described as reconstruction, inevitably meant developing a programme which could address this systemic legacy. After so many decades, even centuries, antagonism was built into the structural, institutional and intimate fabric of Irish society, especially in the north. At the outset, ‘reconciliation’ could only be a dream, hobbled by its essential naiveté. Furthermore, reconciliation could only be historic and systemic in its ambitions. It was also intimate and personal in its effects and legacy. Before success could be assured, sustained action over years if not decades would be required. Furthermore, such a project had social, economic and human dimensions beyond security and political institutions. It was these dimensions which the European Union targeted under its unique PEACE programmes which developed as the single greatest foreign investment in reconstruction after conflict in Ireland. While significant alterations in priorities, structures and criteria were made in the transition from PEACE I to PEACE II, the primary focus of both programmes remained on addressing the legacy of conflict in the past and taking the opportunities which now presented themselves for an inclusive, fair and stable future across the areas of Ireland most directly affected by violent conflict and division- the six counties making up Northern Ireland and the six ‘border counties’ to the immediate south and west.

Over time, the PEACE programmes built into a considerable sustained investment. Whereas PEACE I accompanied the early flush of optimism after the ceasefires, the PEACE II programme was implemented at a time of political uncertainty. Indeed for much of the period of the second programme, the institutions negotiated under the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement were suspended pending further negotiations. As a result, the PEACE programmes acted to sustain and promote the vision of an agreed political future rather than support its implementation as initially envisaged. Nevertheless, by 2007, the political breakthrough to devolution took place. All of this underlined how enormously difficult the measurement of progress in something as complex as a peace process actually is.

From the outset, the European Union implicitly recognised at least three dimensions of peacebuilding: supporting a sustainable economy, ensuring social inclusion and building a shared and inclusive future.
Conflict had left significant scars on the economy of the affected region. In the mid 1990s, the southern border counties were among the poorest in Ireland while the Northern economy had become dangerously dependent on public sector subsidy. Trade across the border was poorly developed while attracting foreign investment remained an uphill struggle. Building on European experiences of the Marshall Plan, the PEACE programmes recognised that the end of conflict was also an opportunity for a rejuvenated economy. The much-discussed ‘peace dividend’ ultimately depended on generating a sustainable and vibrant economy. As a result, considerable investment was made into infrastructure and economic development, whether through employment creation, job training or the promotion of trade and tourism.

Over the period of the programme, although only indirectly related to it, growth in the economy of the Irish Republic now outstripped the rest of the European Union. Northern Ireland too saw a marked improvement in employment and growth. By 2007 the EU had 27 members rather than the 15 of 1995. Ireland north and south had become a target for inward migrant labour reversing generations of mass emigration. As discussions developed around a possible third PEACE programme, it was clear that Irish need did not match that of the new ‘accession’ states of eastern Europe. In a clear sign of success, responsibility for sustaining prosperity and growth would now return to mainstream local responsibility.

From 1995, the EU also recognised the critical importance of social inclusion in peace-building. Consistent with wider EU commitment to addressing identified social inequalities, the PEACE programmes actively supported the direct participation of the disadvantaged. Programmes were directly targeted at child care, young people, and identified areas of social need. By 2007 the success of the economy meant that the even greater demands of social inclusion in other parts of Europe had prior claim on EU budget priorities. Social inclusion could and should be pursued as a domestic political priority rather than relying on EU financial grant aid.

The third, and potentially most difficult, commitment in peace-building was the commitment to building a shared future. Conflict cut Ireland into two and created a massive divide within Northern Ireland. Economic or social theories of peace-building tended to see stability as the outcome of economic
and social prosperity. The challenge of Northern Ireland, however, demanded that these changes also turned polarisation into partnership. Without such a partnership, residual or emerging inequalities would always be treated as a matter of inter-ethnic competition rather than mutual citizen obligations and entitlements and peace would be vulnerable to future cyclical economic developments.

Peace was always fragile until agreement could be found over the future and authority of the state. At the same time, any agreement on the state was unlikely unless there was broad political support for such a partnership and evidence, rather than theory, that partnership could be made plausible and successful in practice, and would be unsustainable unless it was underpinned by a deepening sense of practical co-operation and plausible trust which might lead, some day, to mutual citizenship. While much of the confidence-building depended on developments in politics and security, emerging social and economic co-operation offered practical opportunities to pilot and anticipate progress.

In the literature on peace-building there is regular debate about the relative merits of elite driven (top-down) and popular (bottom-up) approaches to social change. The PEACE programme illustrates that in social systems, such fine cause and effect schema are ultimately distractions. Without some partnership between the elites and the population at large, peace can be put at risk by small changes or events.

The PEACE programmes do not make sense outside a wider political commitment to a shared peace in Northern Ireland and to new relationships across borders in the British-Irish area. At a deep level, reconciliation and a preference for “jaw-jaw” over “war-war” underpin the very purpose of the European Union, especially for its idealists such as Jacques Delors. Peace between and within member states is a priority. The challenge of Northern Ireland was to establish peace based on shared institutions after years of violent conflict over the legitimacy of nations and their institutions.

European Union support depended first and foremost on emergent co-operation between the relevant member states- the UK and Ireland. Simultaneous EU membership and a shared preference for containment of Northern Ireland over renewed international conflict had already contributed
to growing British-Irish rapprochement and co-operation. By the 1990s, both the British and Irish governments were agreed that peace needed to be built on the principles first agreed between the two governments in the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement of inter-community partnership within Northern Ireland, cross-border co-operation on the island of Ireland and inter-governmental co-operation between Dublin and London. After decades of violence, the weakness lay in local willingness to engage in the implications of permanent partnership and the logic of a shared future.

Following the Hume-Adams talks, the Downing Street declaration and the ceasefires of 1994, however, it was clear that the difficulties of making peace were matched by a profound and deeply felt wish to escape the ravages of endless conflict. Ireland, and especially Northern Ireland, was profoundly war-weary. Furthermore, the late 1980s and early 1990s had seen the development of new social, cultural and economic initiatives which prioritised broad participation, economic regeneration and inter-community dialogue.

The emergence of a peace process after 1993 was testimony to a growing recognition of what peace would entail. Unionism and radical republicanism still talked tough, but the combined strength of international consensus and the broad popular acceptance that previous strategies such as the republican armed struggle or Unionist non-co-operation over the Anglo-Irish Agreement had failed, lent a clarity of direction and vision which was increasingly hard to resist, if still enormously difficult to enact.

While the USA invested considerable political and cultural capital in supporting the new movement, the EU was careful to develop a role supportive of the leadership of its member states, emphasising practical social and economic measures. Above all, the PEACE programmes were an investment in popular participation in peace-building. An elite-driven diplomatic framework now spawned a programme driven by small steps.

There is no doubt, however, that the PEACE programmes were designed on a primarily top-down basis, to follow and embed political progress. But although PEACE II was generated under the presumption that a new political settlement for Northern Ireland had been agreed in 1998, this proved to be an unstable assumption. In practice, PEACE II continued in the face of ongoing political disagreements, which at times threatened to put any notion of
reconciliation into reverse. Without political agreement in Northern Ireland, trust was impaired by the threat of ongoing violence. Without trust, or any political pressure to trust rather than to defend traditional positions, the measures of progress agreed for the programme at the outset appeared at times to be wildly optimistic.

What emerged, however, was an important, and potentially useful, learning. Peace in societies is not sustained at a political level alone. PEACE II, insulated as it was by its own criteria and goals from the immediate variations in politics, functioned as one of the primary mechanisms through which a broad direction towards underlying goals could be maintained even while the legacy of conflict continued to create huge difficulties. Unexpectedly, it was its bottom-up character in practice which sustained not only the credibility of the programme but its specific contribution to the wider process. PEACE II became a programme sustaining and underpinning the emergence of a peaceful society rather than a programme to embed the benefits of political agreement. For most of the duration of the programme, reconciliation remained a goal to be reached rather than a planning presumption but it was no less important for all that. The original targets and timescales may have been missed, but the importance of what the PEACE programme actually achieved should not be overlooked. In business-speak, the experience of PEACE II in Ireland is a lesson that when targets are missed, it may sometimes be the targets that have to change rather than declaring the programme a failure.

**Researching a society in transformation**

Ultimately, the most difficult aspect of generating and sustaining peace has proved to be the challenge of transforming the legacy of past division and conflict into the semblance of a shared future. The long war had left a deep division over almost everything. Profound social and political division between Unionists and Nationalists was marked by polarised politics, territorial segregation, separated cultural life and profoundly different experiences of threat and violence. Co-operation and partnership had to be built in the face of cultural norms, structural separation and a political common sense which emphasised the importance of avoidance of controversy
in inter-personal and community engagement and led to a culture seeking good fences as a pre-requisite for good neighbourliness. Demands from international sponsors for partnership could easily be characterised as crude, politically correct, social engineering.

Sustainable partnership could only be built by addressing impossibly difficult questions. Building good relations means risking bad relations by addressing hard questions with deeply vested interests. While politicians grappled with devising political institutions and constitutional frameworks big enough to contain two opposing national and political aspirations, the wider security of the community demanded the decommissioning of paramilitary organisations, demilitarisation by the British army, the root and branch reform of policing and confidence that the violent past was indeed the past. Additionally, sustainable peace required plausible equal citizenship, requiring sufficient maturity to dismantle all remaining formal and informal barriers to equal employment, an honesty about real equality in the distribution of social goods, a renegotiation of cultural expression based on a new peaceful compact rather than on the antagonism of the past and a willingness to address the legacy of violence for those who had been most directly affected.

The research contained within this volume reflects this discovery that good relations depend on addressing bad problems, rather than avoiding them. It is therefore not, and never could be, a story of easy progress and embedded success. Instead it reflects the emerging complexity of the legacy of division and the comprehensive nature of the challenge of reconstructing a society whose very founding principle was hostility on a new basis of co-operation and a shared and common integrity. These are reports from the frontline of transformation, in which the research itself is always subject to changing circumstances.

That is as it should be, because the future success of the peace process depends on continuing to face rather than shirk hard questions. While devolution of power to Northern Ireland is greeted as evidence of almost miraculous political success, there will always be a temptation to regard it as arrival, rather than as a milestone of the road to a new relationship. What the research in this volume demonstrates is that reconciliation is still ahead of us, and absolutely depends on ongoing transformation.
Legacies

Reconciliation is not an event. And while it is impossible to conceive of any serious peace process which does not have sustainable reconciliation somewhere near its core, it is also clear that in Ireland reconciliation remains a deeply contested space. Whereas there seems to be agreement that violence should end, there is far less consensus about what the broader future goals of a peace process should be. While both Britain and Ireland, the EU and the USA have been clear that peace must be able to accommodate both Unionists and Nationalists, the process has not ended the political contest inside Northern Ireland.

The PEACE Programme has wrestled with the absence of definition for some time. The primary imperative in PEACE I was participation, leading some to conclude that the EU programme was being exploited for less exalted purposes. What Brandon Hamber and Grainne Kelly’s research shows is a growing implicit understanding of what the core components of reconciliation might mean. So persuasive was the outcome of the research, that it was immediately adopted by the PEACE programme as central to the conceptual development of EU intervention in peace in Ireland. The result, as Hamber and Kelly reflect in their chapter, was ambivalent. On the one hand, finding a practical common definition of a concept that ultimately only makes sense as a quality within real relationships was essential. On the other, decisive action by bureaucracies can lead both to an overly narrow application of an essentially dynamic concept and of hard political choices, which antagonise critical constituencies.

There is probably no way out of this dilemma. The experience of developing the PEACE II programme was itself dynamic. Without definition, the programme ran the risk of evolving into an unspecific fund for all things good in Northern Ireland and the border counties. With definition, there was a risk of excluding important projects on the basis of an overly narrow interpretation of criteria. Funding and peace-building, it emerges, is an art, in which dialogue and learning are essential parts of the craft of funders and of those in receipt of funding. But none of this debate could have taken place without the decision to adopt a definition of reconciliation in the first place. The ultimate test of the Hamber/Kelly formula is not its detractors, but the degree to which it established a sustainable and vital place from which to undertake work for reconciliation.
Ultimately, these are matters still in transition. Definitions of reconciliation are at risk, because profound political issues about the past remain unresolved. Ireland agreed that violence should stop. But there was no agreement on the nature of the problem, nor on what had to be undertaken to achieve final settlement. The contest for culture and history continues, with the permanent risk that violence might some day return if a case could be made for its effectiveness.

Behind apparently simple or, at first glance, interchangeable terms like ‘Northern Ireland’ or ‘the North of Ireland’ lie whole worldviews and commitments. For some, Northern Ireland is a statement of distinctiveness and internal completeness. For others, reflected within this volume, this sense of completeness is precisely what must be decisively rejected. Hence, the north of Ireland describes what the territory is or should be: an integral part of a naturally whole all-island territory, unnaturally divided by imperial fiat.

The contest over the cause of conflict is always a contest over history and language designed to apportion blame and resist ultimate responsibility for violence and division. That contest is well brought out in Pete Shirlow, Brian Graham and Kieran McEvoy’s work. The language of ‘perpetrators’, ‘protagonists’ or ‘prisoners’ is, above all, a battle over the legitimacy of past actions. Ireland has not found a way to resolve these. The peace process has required pragmatic choices to set them aside, with the ongoing fear that divisions over these histories continue to fester and poison relationships.

Because these contests are set aside rather than addressed, political progress continues. What this research shows is that decisions by those directly involved in violent conflict to adopt a political path make them critical persuaders inside their own political constituencies. At the same time, they are also the great obstacle to cooperation for others. Shirlow et al show decisively that former prisoners have been critical persuaders for a political strategy, especially on the republican side. Furthermore they have often brought considerable intellectual and practical leadership to communities, although inevitably, however, it is to segregated communities, because simultaneously the presence of ‘perpetrators’ is seen as an insult to truth and justice by many.

This is not a dilemma unique to Northern Ireland. After three and half decades, the current peace, or at least the absence of war, is the best justice available. Public silence and private recrimination appears to be the current
least worst solution. The obvious advantage is that government can go on in the absence of any acknowledgement of the past. The danger, of course, is that contest about cause festers into renewed resentment and is driven underground, operating whether acknowledged or unacknowledged to prevent the emergence of a stable future.

The consequences of the absence of agreement or enforceable orthodoxy about cause or responsibility for conflict are most apparent in the areas of justice, truth and reconciliation. In the absence of any authority capable of delivering final judgements, justice must remain a subjective call and abstract. Until now, no state, political tradition or military force has been willing to put itself under the jurisdiction of any other judge. Inquiries into human rights claims against the activities of the state have been controversial and only partially successful. The Bloody Sunday Tribunal has proved expensive and unsatisfactory. Inquiries by the Police Ombudsman have thrown light on hidden places but have increased bitterness in some quarters and have not led to any admission of responsibility by any party. The decision by the British government that there would be no prosecutions arising from the Finucane inquiry has been greeted with relative public silence, but it is a bitter pill for many. A very thin veil has been drawn over activities of other groups engaged in violent conflict, including allegations against prominent individuals and whole political traditions, but it is a veil that is still regularly torn.

In the absence of any objective mechanism for adjudication, truth struggles to escape the level of subjective perception. This perception underlines the deep ambivalence about truth commissions identified by Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern. It is no less deeply felt for that. At worst, such competing but unresolved ‘truths’ fuel antagonism and deepen and harden bitterness. Minimally, truth remains contested and does not provide an objective basis for future decisions.

Perhaps the greatest casualties of all this are those who experienced the hard edge of violence and discrimination. In the absence of a public process, Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern detail how one community, the Ardoyne in Belfast, sought to ensure public acknowledgement of their experiences and vindication of their own loved ones. Unable to sustain the fiction that ‘nothing happened’ they detail the painful process of story telling and its cathartic effects for those involved. In the process the research also highlights the
potential pitfalls ahead. First of all, the story telling was not told to those against whom it was addressed – whether British or Unionist or other. In the context of ongoing mistrust Lundy and McGovern also question whether such processes would lose their cathartic value if they took place on a cross-traditional basis.

While truth-telling in this form is useful as catharsis, it may also deepen the sense of unaddressed injustice and antagonism, reinforcing the bonding relationships of already segregated experience at the expense of any rapprochement with former enemies in the longer term. Secondly, the process of truth-telling is equated with subjective experience rather than set alongside contrary or complex information, context or evidence. The tragic dimension of conflict- that people are victims of a shared political and social relationship as well as of the individual actors within that relationship- therefore remains hidden. The politics of constituting an innocent, victimised sense of ‘us’ in the face of a responsible, guilty sense of ‘them’, remains the central community experience. As a result, and thirdly, it does not engage the wider community or the political system in any way with its responsibilities for support, investigation or reparation. In a fragile political environment, community telling truth to itself may be the only practical option, but out of a separated understanding of what happened comes also a separated definition of progress in the future underlining the potential for profound miscommunication in any common peace project.

The legacy of violence without responsibility is the ultimate challenge for reconciliation. In the absence of any agreement on the origins of conflict, different groups or parties enter the debate with a radically different model of who reconciliation applies to, how it might be achieved and what change has to look like. For Irish republicans, primary responsibility lies with the British State and its historic involvement in Ireland. For Ulster Unionists, responsibility lies with the IRA, and all Unionist violence is relativised by this causal responsibility. For others, responsibility lies with ‘paramilitaries’, ‘Unionist misrule’ or Irish nationalism.

In the absence of any admission of guilt, or evidence of remorse, it is difficult to speak of forgiveness except as a process of active forgetting. Trust remains a strictly qualified commodity. Peace is reduced to its base of the absence of violence, but reconciliation, understood as a radically new
relationship, remains to be achieved. Critically, agreement can be made on the desirability of future prosperity and even on the exclusion of the economically marginalised, but the concept of a shared future remains wrapped up with unresolved issues from the past and contradictory goals and reduced to a marginal extra. Bitterness about the past continues to pose the greatest risk to the long run stability of peace.

There is no easy escape from all of this. In an atmosphere where justifying the legitimacy of the cause is everything, addressing the past risks reopening divisions and poisoning the future. In a context where there is no final authority, reflections on the past stimulate a renewed ‘tit for tat’ rivalry about responsibility rather than remorse. Those with stories to tell become a threat to the stability of the future rather than a gateway to reconciliation. Realism suggests drawing a line. But in an open society, such a line can only be drawn very partially. Whether through local truth recovery processes, or the need of each party to justify their history or the work of journalists and academics, the past continues to challenge the present.

In the interim, the peace process in Ireland has fragile foundations resting on the pragmatic ineffectiveness of violence rather than mutual recognition and reconciliation. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that peace comes ‘dropping slow’ and reconciliation seems such an interminable process.

**The frontline of hostility**

If the consequence of inventing Northern Ireland was to contain the worst of British and Irish antagonism in a confined space, and to set the rest of Britain and Ireland free from historic antagonism, then the experience of ‘the Troubles’ since 1969 has also been an internally differential one. Previous work by Marie Smyth, Mike Morrissey and Marie-Therese Fay identified that bereavement and death after 1975 were contained in the direct experience of three groups: those living in poor urban districts of Belfast, those living in identifiable contested rural areas along the border or in Mid Ulster and those serving in the security forces. What emerged in towns and cities, and particularly in Belfast, were distinct areas of concentration or 'interface'.
Interfaces focussed the complex nexus of poverty and violence. While there is no doubt that poverty tends to increase the propensity for alienation from society and to encourage the emergence of violence, there is also no doubt that the emergence of violence drives the most mobile elements in any community to leave, thus concentrating poverty precisely in those areas where violence is endemic. There is no doubt that both of these processes were visible in Belfast. The demographic setting of Belfast within a historically Protestant hinterland made the process of flight more attractive to Protestants and more difficult for Catholics. The consequence was a pattern of overcrowded Catholic, overwhelmingly nationalist communities, set alongside emptying Protestant areas. In both cases, those with the economic wherewithal, whether financial or educational, were more likely to leave.

The research by O’Donnell and her colleagues underlines the profound and ongoing consequences for young people caught up in this spiral. Sectarian antagonism and fear tended to reinforce the segregation and exclusion of the most marginalised at every level. Those without qualifications struggled to offer suggestions as to what could be done to encourage them to take jobs in areas where they felt excluded. While sectarianism placed restrictions on the job opportunities of young people, this effect multiplied for those living in interface communities. What this research conclusively demonstrates is that no serious agenda to address economic marginalisation and social exclusion can avoid the requirement to build a safe shared future. Fear is an economic and social issue which only a sustainable peace can address.

Jonny Byrne’s work into an outbreak of serious interface violence in East Belfast during 2002, illustrates the Herculean efforts required by communities to re-establish stability once violence breaks out. Once violence breaks out, the pattern of recrimination, defensiveness in relation to community reactions and deep confusion and resentment about the hatred of others creates a spiral which spins easily out of control. Byrne’s research underlines the importance of strong community leadership in such circumstances. In interface communities, such leadership is likely to be severely stretched and established through a willingness to defend the community against immediate threat. While the east Belfast example was ultimately successful in putting a stop to nightly violence, it was only possible through sustained local efforts with
external support. Furthermore, the underlying issues of competition for space remain together with a risk that the communities could be led back into confrontation through the actions of those most at risk, especially unattached or loosely organised young people.

What is clear is that, in spite of the enormous effort, dealing with interfaces can only ever be a question of management. Transformation depends on an elimination of the need to defend the community and a willingness to countenance the emergence of residential areas which are not defined by the cultural or political allegiance of one group, but by recognition of need and the workings of the market. While there is clear local dimension to this, this change can only be accomplished through the elimination of fear and antagonism at a wider level. To make those on interfaces responsible for addressing violence in Northern Ireland is to blame the most vulnerable.

Interfaces reflect an endemic and profoundly challenging legacy of violence in Northern Ireland. The challenge of meeting unequal housing need under conditions of conflict was ultimately achieved through segregation. Ultimately most of this was voluntary. But it was always voluntary in the face of an appalling alternative - the risk of intimidation, violence and even death.

Consequently, most low cost and social housing in Northern Ireland is provided on segregated lines, with many communities being publicly dominated by the paramilitary organisations which emerged as local defenders, but about which everyone harbours some ambivalence. On the other hand, when asked, the majority of respondents in survey after survey reflect a desire to live side by side. What is clear is that absence of safe mixed housing is not so much a crisis of desirability, as one of plausibility.

On the other hand, opening up housing to mixed cultural ownership is enormously difficult. Domestic safety is a paramount consideration for everyone. What Neil Jarman and Ulf Hansson emphasise in their research is that change cannot be undertaken as a result of central dictation. On the other hand, merely replicating current housing pattern continues to extend the segregation of experience and identity into an endless future. Furthermore, how is the desire to create opportunities for inter-community living to be set against the requirement to meet immediate demand, especially when such
demand is not equal across the communities? Jarman and Hansson suggest pilot developments, which begin to erode the crisis of plausibility identified above and extend the notion of choice. The reconciliation of equality and good relations which is the central challenge to a peace process after social division may depend on resolving this conundrum.

**Sharing the future?**

Writing after World War 1, the Italian political philosopher Antonio Gramsci observed that ‘The old is gone, the new is not yet born and what remains are morbid symptoms’. Ireland has moved towards the birth of a new era. But there are many morbid symptoms. Sharing the future remains the only option outside of violence, but it is, tragically, nobody’s aspiration. It is the result we come to when all others have been exhausted. It is ultimately resignation to our inherited predicament.

The political and social challenge is to turn it into our opportunity. Paradoxically, and after a long wait, Northern Ireland has rejoined the mainstream of the modern world, just as the issues of social cohesion, inter-culturalism and multi-faith societies have come to the fore elsewhere. All of them have surfaced against a backdrop of the waning of empire, the legacy of inequality and discrimination and a knowledge that attempts to resolve the challenges on the basis of national purity can only occur in the face of mass murder.

The research in this volume highlights the critical role of political leadership, of social partners such as the trade unions and of central social institutions such as the churches. What the Irish experience has demonstrated is that progress will require us not only to stop but to change. It will require us to change in ways that put learning to the fore and which cannot rely on inherited patterns alone.

The PEACE programmes also highlight the importance of acknowledging that this change is holistic and systemic and cannot be the result of politics and law alone. Change must be experienced, not merely preached, if it is to be really useful. This is an era of show, not tell.
The challenge of integration – of belonging together at a profound level – is a permanent one. The chapters on young people in this volume illustrate that neither naïve optimism about progress nor undue pessimism about hopelessness are called for. What they do illustrate is that the challenge of meeting, engaging and embedding humane and peaceful values are now part of the permanent task of leadership. Not only will peace be dropping slow, but hard questions with political consequences will have to be addressed again and again, if reconciliation is ever to become more than a slogan.

The PEACE programme in Northern Ireland has been a complex and difficult journey. It has, as the cliché suggests, thrown up more questions at each new turn. And it has helped us refigure and redefine good relations for the modern age: good relations are not merely the experience of social harmony, but relationships strong enough to engage with and address real social conflicts in such a way as to reinforce our belonging together rather than undermine it. There is no way to good relations and a shared future without addressing hard problems and our divided past. In spite of the difficulties, progress has been steady in Ireland and the PEACE programme has played a critical, if sometimes unsung part.
Appendix A -
Links to Full Research Reports

**ARK** – www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/
Links to all ARK Young Life and Times reports are available on the website listed above.

**City Bridges** – www.citybridges.com
A PDF version of the full report of this project can be found on the website listed above.

**Democratic Dialogue** –
Links to the full reports for the “Community Reconciliation in Northern Ireland” project can be found on the following site:
www.brandonhamber.com/pubs_reports.htm

**INCORE** – http://www.incore.ulster.ac.uk/research/projects/pcr
A PDF version of the full report of this project can be found on the website listed above.

**Institute for Conflict Research** – www.conflictresearch.org.uk
Copies of the full reports for all three projects from ICR can be found on the website listed above.

**Public Achievement -**
A PDF version of the full report of this project can be found on the website listed above.

**University of Ulster – Dr. Lundy and Dr. McGovern**
A PDF version of the full report of this project can be made available by contacting staff in European Programme at CRC.
University of Ulster – Prof. Hargie, Dr. Dickson and Dr. O’Donnell
www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/research/comms/communication/report.pdf
A copy of the full report and the Executive Summary of this project can be found on the website above.

University of Ulster – Dr. Shirlow
A PDF version of the full report of this project can be made available by contacting staff in European Programme at CRC.

University of Ulster – Centre for Voluntary Action Studies
A PDF version and printed copies of the full report of this project can be made available by contacting staff in European Programme at CRC.
Appendix B –
Peace II Extension Programme
Research

Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages – *Giving Voices to Africans West of the Bann.*

ARK – *Cross-Community Schemes: Participation, motivation, mandate.*

ARTS – *Realising Integrated Sustainable Communities in Deconstructed Interface Environments.*


Institute for Conflict Research – *Segregated Life and Sectarianised Lives.*

The Queen’s University of Belfast – *Education and a Shared Future: Structural and Procedural Changes to Promote Reconciliation and Good Relations in Northern Ireland Schools.*

The Queen’s University of Belfast – *Fears, Facts and Feelings: The Impact and Role of Sectarianism in Everyday Life.*

School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering (SPACE) – *Planning Shared Space for A Shared Future.*

St. Columb’s Park House – *Minority Inclusion in Decision Making in New Super Councils.*

University of Ulster – *Learning to Deal with Difference in the Workplace.*
A Sustainable Peace?
Research as a Contribution to Peace Building in Northern Ireland