The Flame Still Burn

A study of attitudes amongst you people in Northern Ireland

THE ElyCentre

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INTRODUCTION

This report represents the findings from the Flame Still Burns project, which was undertaken by QE5 in conjunction with The Ely Centre from November 2004 to March 2005. Thirty two sixteen and seventeen year olds from fifteen community relations organisations participated in the project.

The premise behind this project was to:

Provide the opportunity for the youth in Northern Irish Society to express what they believe the causes and effects of the conflict have been on their lives, thus providing an opportunity on how conflict resolution practice in Northern Ireland can be improved, for those who continue to suffer from the conflict.

The project was quantitative in nature and utilised the Youth Life and Times (2003) survey which was developed by ARK, a joint resource between Queen University Belfast and the University of Ulster which was developed in 2000. The YLT focuses on the attitudes of Northern Irish youth and deals with themes such as sectarianism and community relations.

The Ely Centre promotes the principles of conflict resolution and their main aims follow the path of:

- The promotion of cognitive dissonance
- Hostile attitude reduction
- Disarming behaviours
- Trust building
- Prejudice reduction
- Positive Identity construction
- Cross community engagement

These aims our reflected in the work of The Ely Centre where they engage throughout Fermanagh and South Tyrone in

- Victims Representation
- Social Capital and Capacity Building
- Local Wealth Creation
- Research and publications in the field of conflict resolution.

An important objective for The Ely Centre is to ensure that 2nd Generation Victims from across Northern Ireland have the opportunity to express their attitudes and general societal perceptions are documented and taken into account.

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This report presents the findings from the survey. These are complemented with a literature review of recent research on, social cognition and attitude construction, inter-group conflict, social identity, sectarianism and community relations in Northern Ireland with particular regard for young people. In the third chapter the methodology used during the project is explained in more detail. In the fifth chapter the findings of the project are presented and the final chapter explores the effect of these findings and recommendations for future practice. The appendices contain a copy of the questionnaire utilised.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report represents the findings from the Flame Still Burns Project which was undertaken by QE5 in conjunction with The Ely Centre, from December 2005 to March 2005. Around one hundred 16 and 17 year olds from 15 Community Relations Council organisations specialising in offering help to victims/survivors of the conflict throughout Northern Ireland participated in the project. The overall aim of the project was to:

Provide the opportunity for the youth in Northern Irish Society to express what they believe the causes and effects of the conflict have been on their lives, thus providing an opportunity for conflict resolution practice in Northern Ireland to improve particularly for those 2nd generation victims who suffer daily from the conflict.

The project built on the experience and findings of similar projects particularly the 2003 Young Life and Times Survey conducted by ARK.

The Methodology

Quantitative measures in the form of questionnaires were utilised in this project as the most appropriate research design for achieving the project due to funding limitations. Questionnaires are intended to measure people's attitudes, emotions, actins and opinions. Since the responses to surveys are necessarily a persons self report.

The Youth Life and Times Survey (2003) has been successfully implemented by ARK and provided views on community relations on a large scale statistical level. This questionnaire was developed in consultation with young people and asked a series of questions on young people's experiences of community relations, within school, habitus and community settings. Equally it explored contact and friendship patterns and also examined young people's attitudes. Due to previous success, this survey tool was consensually viewed as the most appropriate method to employ in the project.

One Hundred and Fifty questionnaires were delivered to fifteen community relations organisations around. Northern Ireland. These groups where chosen through intensive consultation with the Community Relations Council as a representative sample of organisations offering assistance to Victims/Survivors of the Conflict.

The project staff where then asked to distribute the questionnaires to ten young people connected to their respective groups and forward the completed surveys to The Ely Centre.

In total 32 young people took part in the Flame Still Burns Project.

Literature Review

This study presents a theoretical overview of identities and identity-based segregation prevalent in post conflict societies. What follows is an analysis of the effects of this violence and relevant contemporary findings that has been conducted on the impact of the Northern Irish conflict, with a particular emphasis on attitude construction in young people. An overview of acclaimed theories explaining attitude construction and the accompanying behaviour and the key components of sectarianism is discussed.

Contemporary research suggests that over thirty three percent of young people in Northern Ireland experience repeat victimisation due to their religious or cultural identity. This victimisation emerges in various forms such as verbal abuse. The 2nd Generation victims/survivors category has accounted for forty percent of conflict related deaths in Northern Ireland, thus engaging with young people is of paramount importance for the conflict resolution process and the future of Northern Ireland. If a shared future is the utopia for all Northern Irish society, the situation of this perception must explored.

FINDINGS

One can suggest that national and religious identity are still extremely important in young peoples lives with almost 75% of respondents stating that religion is extremely important in their lives. Equally many young people perceive that community relations are about the same as they were 5 years ago and almost 40% of young people believe this situation will improve in the next 5 years, however it is clear that tensions are still evident, many young people attend single identity schools, and prefer to live in single identity areas and many state their families opinions are paramount in their lives and the decisions inherent in them however clearly progress is needed and this concerns the matter of trust.

CONCLUSION

In this section numerous theories explaining the results are conducted leading to an overall explanation of conflict resolution according to Brutons work. It is clear many attempts have tried to get at the root of the problem in conflictual societies but many theories need to be combined to produce a reliable explanation of society IN Northern Ireland. Cross community engagement has been cited as a possible way forward , advantages are inherent in this approach but there are numerous criticisms also, it is clear that while tensions are still evident in the next generation of Northern Ireland more work needs to be conducted in this field. While attempting to do this, this study falls fouls to numerous limitations which are discussed and remedies suggested.

The Methodology

The design of the Flame Still Burns project although employing a relatively small sample was based on previous research undertaken by ARK (2003). It consisted of three key elements.

1. A literature review
2. Questionnaires delivered to a sample of 16 and 17 year olds who where members of fifteen Community Relations organisations in six areas of Northern Ireland.
3. Data analysis and consideration of the findings with young people.

Literature Review

An up-to-date literature review of recent research with young people on sectarianism and community relations in Northern Ireland was undertaken prior to the fieldwork to inform the researchers about latest findings and issues in relation to the conflict in Northern Ireland. A synopsis of this review is presented in the next section of the report.

Quantitative Method

The 2003 YLT survey provided such views on a large-scale statistical level. The questionnaire was developed in consultation with young people and asked a series of questions on young people's experiences of community relations within school and community settings. It explored contact and friendship patterns, and examined young people's attitudes and experiences to cross community Programmes. The YLT questionnaire also included 'free response' questions in order to give young people the opportunity to comment on their experiences of community relations in Northern Ireland. Due to funding limitation 150 young people were invited to participate in this project. The young people were members of fifteen Community Relations Organisations, who through intensive consultation were seen as being representative of the 50 plus organisations the Community Relations Council fund for delivering services to Victims/Survivors. Over 100 young people responded to the questionnaire.

Procedure

A professional survey organisation (QE5) were contracted to survey a sample of young people from the Northern Irish Population. Participants were selected from 15 Community Relations groups from across Northern Ireland who received funding from the Community Relations Council. The young people were asked to complete the questionnaires in the centres they were a member of, under the guidance of the organisations staff.

Because the society in Northern Ireland is deeply divided along socio-religious lines, community relations can be a sensitive subject area. Although young people in Northern Ireland today are less likely to have been victims of bomb attacks and paramilitary shootings, the vast majority of teenagers still live in

segregated housing areas and attend segregated schools. Of the respondents to the 2003 YLT survey, only 29% lived in mixed religious neighbourhoods and 89% attended schools that they described as consisting 'most', 'nearly all' or 'fully' of students that were of the same socio-religious background as themselves. Of those living in single religious neighbourhoods, 47% of Catholics and 34% of Protestants had no friend at all from the other main religious community. Similarly, 32% of Protestants and 39% of Catholics who attended segregated schools had no friend at all from the other main religious community. (Devine and Schubotz 2004). Furthermore, due to the close social and extended family networks in Northern Ireland, young people are likely to have relatives or acquaintances that were directly affected by the Northern Ireland conflict.

It was therefore essential to provide an environment in which participants in the Project felt comfortable to complete the questionnaires, thus the centres that they belonged to and received support from , where the ideal secure locations for true responses.

Data Analysis and consideration

All surveys where conducted during the period December 2004 – February 2005. A total of 32 Northern Irish young people were interviewed of which 34 % were males and 66 % were females. Participants ranged from 14 years old to 25 years old with a mean age of 18

10 % classified themselves as Protestants and 63 % classified themselves as Catholic. Of the remaining 27 % of the sample, 27 %classifies themselves as neither.

Were they lived:
56% of participants stated they were from a small city or town
19 % of participants stated they were from a big city
3 % of participants stated they did not know
3% of participants stated they were from a country village
19%of participants stated they were from a farm or home in the country

Table 1: illustrating the groups who were invited to participate in the study

Group Name	Start	End
Ballymurphy Womens Centre	1	12
FACT	13	24
FAIR	25	36
Omagh Self Help & Support Group	37	48
Relatives for Justice	49	60
SAVER/NAVER	61	72
Shankhill Stress and Trauma Group	73	84
South Down Action For Healing Wounds	85	96
Survivors of Trauma	97	108
The Aisling Centre	109	120
The Ashton Centre	121	132
WAVE	133	144

Youth Link	145	156
The Ely Centre	157	168

LITERATURE REVIEW

'Most if not all, young people in Northern Ireland have been influenced by the Troubles, in the formation of their attitudes, construction of their religious and societal divides, oppression and discrimination' (Connolly,2002)

There is a body of opinion which believes that as communities in the North of Ireland are a part of the problem, they must inevitably become a part of the solution. Whatever one thinks of the merits of such a position, it is clear that the pressure for change has come from within those same communities

Northern Ireland is a highly segregated society, with deeply entrenched divisions between the two main socio-religious communities of Protestants and Catholics. Religious and Cultural identity in inextricably associated with community segregation (Maginn and Connolly,1999) Cultural identity is inherent in many facets of life in Northern Ireland, through shared experiences and attitudes, national and religious identity, family attitudes and class. Religious identity, equally acts as a strong marker for community or political affiliation in this polarised society (Kelly and Sinclair, 2003).

The expressions of both identities are often perceived through specific cultural activities. St Patrick's Day is primarily associated with Catholicism and the 12th July Commemoration of the Battle of the Boyne is viewed as part of the Protestant heritage. This expression of identity, has in recent years been increasing, as a process in conflict resolution, positive identity construction must be encouraged (Darby, 2003) this may explain the highest turnout and participation of cultural activities, recently the Orange Order, concluded that in the past few years, numbers attending the celebrations have almost reached record highs, with increasing young people joining it ranks.

The Conflict in Northern Ireland, created the climate within which sectarianism and segregation permeates every aspect of Northern Irish society, on personal, social, political, recreational and economic levels (Connolly et al, 1999) In the early 21st Century, residential, educational and social segregation is prevalent, reflected in the fact that 95% of young people attend schools segregated by religion, and 80% of social housing is likewise divided (Kelly and Sinclair,2003)

This picture of segregation amongst the next generation in Northern Ireland is illustrated in the responses of the 2003 Youth Life and Times Survey, with less than a third (29%) of participants living in mixed – religion neighbourhoods and only 6% of respondents attending planned integrated schools (Devine and Schubotz,2004). The divisions prevalent throughout society are continuing to fuel sectarianism and although there is a desire for peace, support for social demarcation is increasing and research is continuing to produce a polarised social, economic, political and cultural landscape (Hughes and Donnelly, 2002)

The Human Cost of The Troubles.

Different cycles emerged among the organisations principally responsible for the killings in Northern Irish society, with peaks of activity occurring at different points In the period 1969 -1994. These peaks are related to levels of unemployment and the annual GDP.

Republican paramilitaries killed 74% of all protestants, over 25% of all Catholics, and almost 96% of those who where classified as 'Non Northern Ireland'. The death rate for the catholic community exceeded that of the protestant community. The Loyalist paramilitaries killed 19% of all protestants, almost 50% of all Catholics and just 2% of the Non Northern Ireland category. The British Army and the RUC accounted for 11% of the total population fatalities.

Civilians were the largest category killed and account for almost 53% of the total population killed. The British Army accounted for almost 15%, Republican paramilitaries accounted for almost 13%, The RUC accounted for 8% of those killed with other groups accounting for less than 6%.

From the figures above it is reasonable to assume that Northern Ireland has experienced relatively high and consistent levels of violence in the last 40 years. With over 3,600 people dead as a direct consequence of the violence during this period and well over 40,000 personally injured. A particular concern, running throughout this time, has been with the plight of children and the effects that the violence and deep social divisions were having on their lives.

From the early 1970s onwards, a plethora of research studies has been undertaken focusing on a range of issues from children's attitudes through to their moral and emotional development (see Cairns 1987; Gough et al. 1992; Trew 1992; Cairns and Cairns 1995; Cairns et al.1995; Connolly with Maginn 1999).

For young people in Northern Ireland the 'Troubles' and their legacy have provided the context against which they have grownup (Smyth 1998). Indeed, throughout the period of conflict young people have been at the highest risk of being Killed, with almost 26% of victims aged 21 or less and the 19-20 age group having the highest death rate for any age group in Northern Ireland (Faye Smith 2002). From the late 1960s through to the mid-1990s. It was estimated that between 1969 and 1998, 257 young people under the age of 18 died as a direct result of the conflict, a figure that had risen to 324 by 2003 and the impact on young people living in the areas worst affected by the conflict was most acute (Smyth et al 2004).

In addition to death and injury, the impact of the Northern Ireland conflict on young people has also manifested itself in psychological and emotional trauma. Many young people have experienced trauma in a variety of ways through the loss of family members; witnessing violence and murders; and experiences of rioting and bombings. These experiences have resulted in increasing emotional problems, suicide and related concerns regarding their welfare. Nearly a third 27% of young people aged 12-17 in one study reported having been threatened or verbally abused as a direct result of their religion (Connolly,2002)

Due to such escalating problems, numerous services have been constructed to deal with the needs of young people affected by the conflict employing a range of therapies in their remedy; inevitably a burgeoning literature surrounding this increasingly ‘popular’ field continues to evolve.

Contemporary Findings

Most research approaches to evaluate children and young people's understanding of the conflict have included both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. These have included surveys (Smyth and Scott 2000) and psychological measurements and indirect observations (Jahoda and Harrison 1975; Cairns and Duriez 1976). More recently, research has attempted to document and measure the impact of over 30 years of armed conflict on children and young people's lives (Smyth et al.2004).

Ewart & Schubotz (2004) in an OFM / DFM commissioned study attempted to analyse the attitudes of 3 – 11 year olds living in the Belfast area . While living in the same city, the children were found to inhabit very different social worlds. In terms of their day-to-day experiences, there was little to distinguish the Protestant and Catholic children. Rather, the major source of influence on the children's lives was where they lived and, more specifically, their experience of the violence is the variable that determines a majority of the perspectives which even 3 year olds view Northern Irish Society from.

One Study by Jahoda and Harrison (1975), involved a number of tests with 60 boys aged six and 10 from Belfast and a further 60 boys of the same age from Edinburgh. One test involved them being asked to sort a collection of 16 items that consisted of four circles, four semi-circles, four squares and four trapezia. Each group of four shapes was coloured differently – one green, one orange, one red and one blue. Overall, Jahoda and Harrison found that at the age of six, the boys from Belfast and from Edinburgh displayed no significant differences in whether they chose to sort the items by shape or by colour.

However, at the age of 10, while all the boys in Edinburgh sorted the items by shape, all of their counterparts in Belfast sorted them by colour. For the boys in Belfast, they found that this reflected an increasing awareness of the political significance of the colours. Over half of the 10 year olds spontaneously mentioned religion when explaining their method for sorting, with one boy, for example, arguing that: '*cause red and blue are Protestant colours and orange and green are Catholic colours'*.

The second study, conducted by Cairns et al. (1980), compared five and six year old children from a fairly trouble-free area of Northern Ireland with a control group from a South London suburb. Each were shown a photograph of a derelict row of houses and asked to explain what they felt had happened to them. Cairns et al. found that the children from Northern Ireland were much more likely to make reference to 'terrorist bombs' and 'explosions' in their explanations than the group of children from South London.

Finally, the third study undertaken by McWhirter and Gamble (1982), involved a standard word definition test with a total of 192 children aged six and nine from three different areas of Northern Ireland; one from an area that had a history of sectarian conflict and the other two from different relatively 'peaceful' towns.

The children were asked to define a series of words including those of 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' which were embedded within the list so as to disguise the focus of the research. Their conclusions, to quote, were that 'about half the children in Northern Ireland, at six years of age, have some understanding of at least one of the category labels, Protestant and Catholic, and that by nine years of age the majority of Northern Ireland children are aware, to some degree, of what both terms denote'

As indicated in all these studies, a general and consistent picture has emerged from the variety of studies conducted over this period regarding the development of children's attitudes and awareness with age. As shown above in relation to their ability to recognise the political/cultural significance of colours or names, while some awareness is evident among children as young as five or six, the research has found that they are only able to demonstrate a strong and consistent ability to do this at the ages of 10 or 11 (Cairns and Cairns 1995). This overall pattern has also been shown in terms of the ability, for example, to distinguish between stereotypically Catholic and Protestant first names (Cairns 1980; Houton et al. 1990) and faces (Stringer and Cairns 1983) and also between Belfast, Dublin and standard English accents

Some optimism is discovered in recent consultations of 16 year olds undertaken by JEDI who concurred with the vision of a more shared and pluralist society. The advantage of this vision was highlighted by research into the opinions of 16 years olds in Northern Ireland. Most young people responding to this survey felt that more integration would lead to a better understanding between people.

Young people acknowledge that this vision will be difficult to achieve and requires work to change people's attitudes as well as work to build relationships across different divisions. From this consultation process young people believed a number of *actions* are required to build a shared future in areas of segregation. This included:

- ***Challenging racism and sectarianism***
- ***Bring paramilitary activity to an end***
- ***Policing that is more involved with local communities***
- ***Local Political leadership***
- ***Work to build local relationships***
- ***Opportunities for different cultural and religious groups to mix***

Young People also identified a range of *barriers* to the creation of a Shared Future, Including:

- ***Fear of speaking out***
- ***The troubles and the legacy of conflict***
- ***Limited opportunities to meet with those from different religious or cultural backgrounds***
- ***Stereotypes***

(*ARK at the Institute of Governance, Public Policy and Social Research, Queens University Belfast, 2004)*

Social Cognition and Attitude Construction

Inherent to the findings prevalent in all the studies outlined above concerning segregation is attitude construction and strengthening, through the various experiences, emotions or events that all of Northern Irish society has been witness to. Social cognition refers to the way individuals gather, use and interpret information about social aspects of their world (Taylor,1977). It is concerned with the way that cognitive elements, such as attitudes, beliefs and values shape our social behaviour.

What is undisputed by research is that all individuals in Northern Ireland were not born with the religious and cultural perceptions and beliefs they hold today. Attitudes such as sectarianism are learnt through numerous processes which will be highlighted below. What is evident throughout research is that an individual's attitudes are highly influenced by the environment in which they grow up. Children also model the attitudes that are expressed by people with whom they identify. Equally parents, schools, peers, the media and other significant influences on young people contribute in this socialisation process.

However people clearly alter their behaviours and attitudes when they are aware that they are in the presence of other people, at certain times this may have a positive outcome however as the data above clearly illustrates a segregated society, it is evident that the effect of a group of people on an individual has a sinister side. This can be seen in the riots surrounding the 12th July due to parade routes and what is currently ongoing surrounding the interface area of Belfast.

The presence of others of a similar cultural or religious group can weaken normal restraints on behaviour and may lead to socially prohibited activities. In extreme cases, an individual in a group may become so caught up that they lose a sense of individual responsibility, and a kind of mob psychology takes over, this process of de-individuation allows for more anonymity and diffusion of responsibility.

In turn these conditions may reduce self awareness, weaken restraints and reduce concern over social evaluation the stage is then set for anti social behaviour. This form of social cognition we can say only effects some aspects of life in Northern Ireland, riots are the exception rather that the norm, however social cognition is inherent in our divided society, through where an individual lives, what sport they follow, where they socialise or attend school.

Cultural or Religious groups exert a strong influence on those who belong to them to adhere to the common practice. This tendency to match ones behaviour to that of others in the group is called conformity People conform at the earliest age of cognitive reasoning, some commentators in the field, state this can occur by the age of three (Seligmann,2003) by adopting the social and cultural norms of the larger group how else can one explain the findings that where produced above. Only 5% of young people in Northern Ireland attend planned segregated schools.

It is clear that with this conformity or obedience to the cultural norm of each group a high level of negative attitudes towards outside groups are evident. This prejudice is maintained in part by stereotypes, mental images in which specific mental, physical

and behavioural traits are uncritically applied to members of the other group. Following stereotype construction, polarisation or segregation may arise and this can cover all aspects of society as Connolly et al findings suggest. The process of group discussion is usually manifested through group polarisation in that a more extreme reaction is constructed, such as single identity neighbourhoods, polarised politics, workplaces or schools. Because people spend a large part of their lives in groups it is crucial to recognise the effects of group processes, both on individual members and in terms of intergroup action, decisions and attitudes in general .

Catholic & Protestant Culture

Research has considered the social contexts in which the attitudes of children and young people are formed, and the age at which they first develop an awareness of sectarianism. Research indicates that children can recognise diversity and hold sectarian prejudices from the age of three; by the age of five or six, a considerable number of children display an awareness of sectarian and paramilitary violence; and by the age of ten or eleven, many have developed deeply entrenched sectarian opinions (Connolly et al. 2002; Connolly and Healy 2003). One study highlighted children's and young people's first recollections of the Troubles, and this ranged from those who had experience of violence and death within their family or community to others who associated certain events and symbols with a particular religious affiliation (Smyth et al. 2004).

Notably it was respondents who lived in interfaces between single-identity communities who reported the highest level of exposure to inter-community violence. These findings are significant in that they indicate that children, at a young age, are already beginning to assimilate and distinguish key cultural symbols to differentiate between Catholics and Protestants.

For both traditions, their culture is the unique character of each group. It encompasses the values and norms shared by members of each tradition. Culture is 'the human made part of the environment' (Herskovitz,1955), it is the economic, social, political and religious institutions that direct and control current catholic and protestants and socialise the youth(Lytle & Brett,1995) Catholicism and Protestantism cultural values direct societies attention to what is more and less important. Their norms define what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Both cultures values and norms provide the philosophy underlying their institutions which preserve their cultural values and norms and give them authority. If the youth are the hope of the next century, it is with the culture of their respective traditions that changes must occur.

The literature on international conflict paints a rather negative view of culture, and there appears to be a broad agreement on this point. In Northern Ireland, Iraq, Argentina, cultural misunderstandings continue to fuel conflict. Inherent in any culture are groups and each group must possess their own social identity. Catholic and Protestant identities have been extremely important in Northern Irish society. It is this aspect that continues to fuel sectarianism here along with numerous other factors such as what football team a person supports.

According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner,1977) individuals define themselves to a large extent in terms of their social group memberships and tend to seek a positive social identity. This social identity consists of those aspects of an individuals self image that derive from the social categories the individuals perceives himself or herself belonging to; and the value and emotional significance ascribed to that membership. Thus it is a self definition in terms of group membership. Emphasising that motivational as well as cognitive factors underlie intergroup differentiation, social identity theory holds that positive comparisons provide a satisfactory social identity whereas negative comparisons convey an unsatisfactory social identity.

Social Identity

Social identity theory predicts that members of social groups will differentiate primarily on dimensions that provide them with a favourable view of their own group. Also social categorisation per se can cause sectarianism and discrimination. In brief to remedy this process which will be discussed below, changing the structure of social categorisation is important and decategorisation, recategorization and crossed categorization can reduce or change the salience of existing perspectives in a complementary fashion.

While culture, social identity and categorisation are of paramount importance in theoretical summaries of conflict, other factors are extremely important in sectarianism and these shall be discussed below inline with the survey tool implemented in this study.

The Key Components of Sectarianism

Following from culture and social identity young people are able to identify a range of mediums through which religion can be defined and sectarian attitudes exhibited. These include:

- ***name,***
- ***the areas in which you live,***
- ***school uniform and***
- ***family*** (Sinclair et al. 2004; Smyth et al. 2004).

However, the respondents in one study noted that stereotyping is a natural process and only becomes problematic if attitudes are manifested into sectarian behaviour.

Interestingly, two-thirds of young people reported that they had been victims of sectarianism – ranging from name calling to the murder of a family member – and this contributed to the development of more sectarian attitudes and animosity towards the other community (McCole et al. 2003).

In addition to considering the development of sectarian attitudes, research has also examined the various factors that influence young people's attitudes towards the situation in Northern Ireland.

Factors identified by young people as contributing to sectarian attitudes include:

- ***family background,***
- ***school,***
- ***media,***
- ***politics,***
- ***social lives and***
- ***personal experiences*** (Sinclair et al. 2004; Devine and Schubotz 2004).

Young people have commented in interviews that, despite a close affiliation with their communities and religious and political identities and the influence of their families and communities, they are keen to exert some control over the development of their own attitudes thus work targeting these young people is paramount in the cessation of sectarianism in Northern Irish society.

Family

The attitudes of family members are perhaps the most influential factor in shaping children and young people's attitudes to sectarianism. Nearly half (47%) of the 2003 YLT respondents highlighted that their families were the most important influence on their views about the other religious community (Devine and Schubotz 2004).

Smyth et al. (2004) found that parents told stories and introduced young people to the Troubles, in a way that was coloured by their interpretations of events. Nearly 60% of young people agreed that members of their family had taught them negative things about people from the opposite religious background. Sectarian attitudes continue in Northern Ireland mainly because of the influence of parents who encouraged young people to develop sectarian attitudes (McCole et al. 2003). Some young people recalled personal examples of where their parents encouraged them to join in local riots and make petrol bombs (Kelly 2002).

Findings from the 2003 YLT survey indicated that 27% of respondents reported that they would not be supportive of a family member marrying someone of a different religion (Devine and Schubotz 2004), and this is further reflected in the NCB project where almost a quarter would not consider cross-community marriage, due to the negative perceptions of other family members (Sinclair et al. 2004).

Cairns (1996) comments that children's lack of optimism regarding future peace may be attributed to discontinuity between children and their parents and even grandparents. Children may not have role models who are instrumental in fostering attitudes that would promote good community relations. However, Smyth et al. (2004) commented that the influence of the family could diminish as children grow older and as other powerful influences, such as the wider community and the socio-political and economic environment, begin to impact on young people's behaviour.

Peers

Young people have also reported how sectarianism has been constructed through their social lives, with this leading to 'restricted social spaces' in choice of venues for meeting friends and undertaking social activities such as sport (Sinclair et al. 2004; Smyth et al. 2004). Most young people have reported that, due to community and educational segregation they have had limited opportunities to develop cross-community friendships (Kelly 2002; Smyth et al. 2004). Almost 70% of respondents reported that they only had friends within their own communities, and almost half preferred segregated residency (Sinclair et al. 2004). Notably, the Northern Ireland conflict has been a defining feature in determining the extent to which some young people can develop and sustain cross-community friendships, in terms of geographical location and the prevalence of opportunities for mixing.

Participation in sectarian behaviour and same-religion friendships has also been influenced by peer pressure. Some young people, however, are able to establish cross-community friendships without any problems (Smyth et al. 2004) and in various ways: through music and drama clubs, employment, as acquaintances of other friends and family members, and through mixed communities and integrated schooling, as well as specific cross-community events (McCole et al. 2003).

Over three-quarters of YLT respondents have had cross-community contact with pupils from another religious community, mainly through inter-school projects, although over half (52%) reported having cross-community contact through other avenues (Devine and Schubotz 2004

School

Schooling experiences have also influenced attitudes towards community relations and sectarianism. Research has indicated that young people are influenced by their peers and may wish to conform with friends who display sectarian attitudes. Schools are easily identified as either State-controlled (Protestant) or Catholic maintained and therefore the uniform is an identifying marker of religion for young people attending segregated schools – indeed, school uniform has often been highlighted by young people as exposing them to sectarian attacks when travelling to and from school (Smyth et al. 2004)

These divisions are further perpetuated where schools are located within segregated communities, with some schools encircled by symbols of a political and sectarian nature. Only 6% of the YLT respondents attended an integrated school, and it was reported that division was maintained by segregated education (Devine and Schubotz 2004).

Despite endorsement by the Department of Education (DENI), integrated provision is available for less than 5% of the school population (NICIE 2002). Approximately half in the YLT survey supported the need for integrated education in promoting community relations amongst young people.

In recognition of the difficulties faced by young people, there have been policy developments within the education sector to tackle segregation and sectarianism. As part of education reform, but specifically to foster cross- community contacts amongst schools, statutory provision for Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) was established in 1992. EMU was designed to address political division in the education curriculum and to promote community relations amongst young people. Research by Smith and Robinson (1996) in the early years of the implementation of the EMU programme found that it was fraught with contentious debates and practical ambiguities regarding its implementation. It was also received with some reluctance because it aired sensitive and controversial issues (Bennison 2000).

Smyth and colleagues (2004) comment: ‘In common with other institutions in Northern Ireland, schools seem to maintain a form of silence about issues of division, conflict and sectarianism’ Likewise Gallagher (2001) comments that a key challenge for the education system will be to facilitate an environment in which young people can openly discuss the impact of the past and their visions for the future.

The Media

The media portrayal of the Troubles is a factor that has contributed to the development of sectarian attitudes. Young people have reported that the media puts too much emphasis on the Troubles and has contributed to the stereotyping of Protestants and Catholics, with the potential to incite sectarian attitudes and attacks (Sinclair et al. 2004).

The Politicians

Politicians have not been viewed positively by young people. In fact, research has indicated that young people think most politicians are sectarian, negative role models, and hence are restricted in their willingness and ability to resolve the Northern Ireland conflict. Furthermore, they do not take account of the needs of young people (McCole et al. 2003; Smyth et al. 2004).Smyth and Scott (2000) highlighted that 79% of young people were not interested in Northern Irish politics, and that this was possibly compounded by a failure to consult young people on matters that affect them. Almost three-quarters of the young people (73%) reported that they would have voted on the Good Friday Agreement had they had the opportunity. Of those who said they would have voted, a majority (62%) said they would have supported it.

The Paramilitaries

Research suggests that young people's attitudes towards paramilitaries are similar to the views they possess in relation to politicians and the media being not favourable: young people were critical of their punishment attacks, harassment of children and young people, and the violent means in which they control communities. However, some young people admired the paramilitaries in terms of the protection they offered within their communities (McCole et al. 2003).

Sectarian Signage

Research has shown that half (51%) of three-year-olds were able to identify at least one symbol; and 90% of six-year-olds were able to identify the significance of three events or symbols associated with sectarianism (Connolly and Healey 2003). In the 2003 YLT survey, 35% of respondents felt that these symbols were intimidating and they would therefore, if they were of the other religious background, not feel comfortable being in that area (Devine and Schubotz 2004).

This is confirmed by other research findings (Sinclair et al. 2004; Smyth et al. 2004). Symbols have been instrumental in perpetuating sectarian attitudes, are indicative of a particular communities' affiliation to political and religious beliefs, and reduce neutral or shared spaces. Depending on their perspective, these were either deemed to be reassuring (if prevalent in one's own community) or intimidating (if prevalent within the 'other' community). Symbols, primarily located within segregated housing, were associated with

defining young people's social spaces to the extent of having 'no go' areas for residing, socialising or accessing services (Kelly 2002).

Conclusion

Despite policy initiatives, many young people have feel relatively powerless and are denied consultation within their communities and schools. The sense of exclusion experienced by many young people is further compounded by the implicit apathy exhibited by many adults concerning the state of politics in Northern Ireland (Smyth et al. 2004).

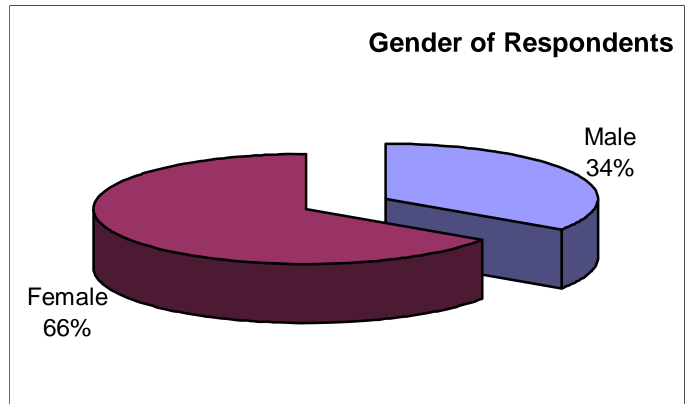
It remains for one to say there is no getting away from the fact that the development of children's attitudes and the impact that the conflict continues to have on these are complex phenomena(Connolly& Healy,2004) Numerous factors have been raised as possible causes of sectarianism, none on their own may lead to the situation Northern Irish society finds itself in today, but the cumulative effect of all these variables is inevitably leaving an imprint in the social perspective on Northern Ireland next generation, even those as young as three years of age.

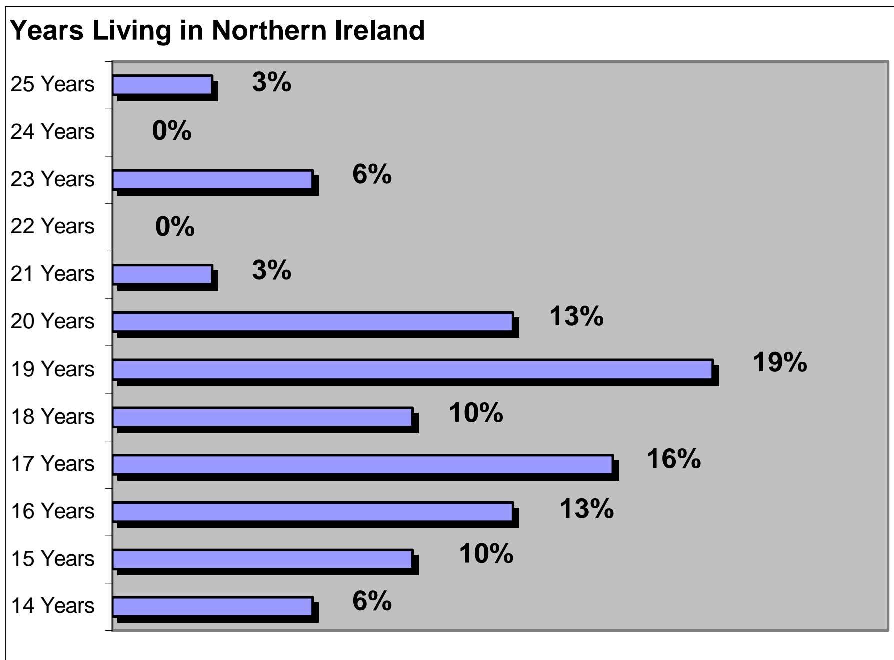
What follows is a review of the findings attained from circa 100 young people connected to various community and victims/survivors organisations throughout Northern Ireland.

FINDINGS

Demographic Profile of Respondents

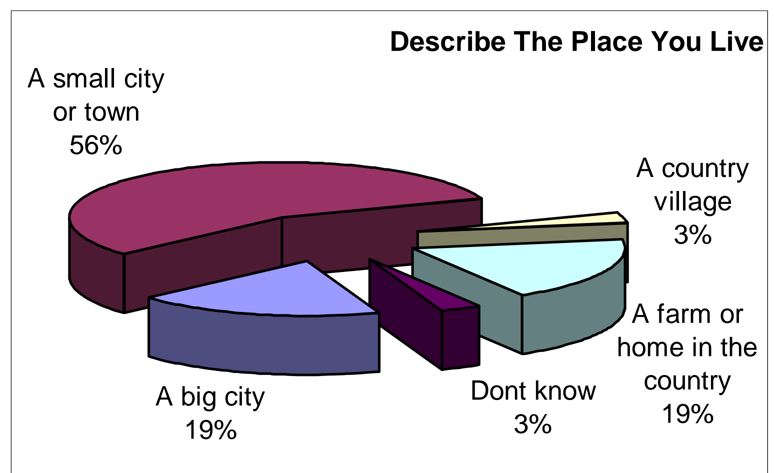
Of the 32 youths participating in the study, two-thirds (66%) were female and one third (34%) was male. The ethnic origin of the participants was 94% White and 6% Other.

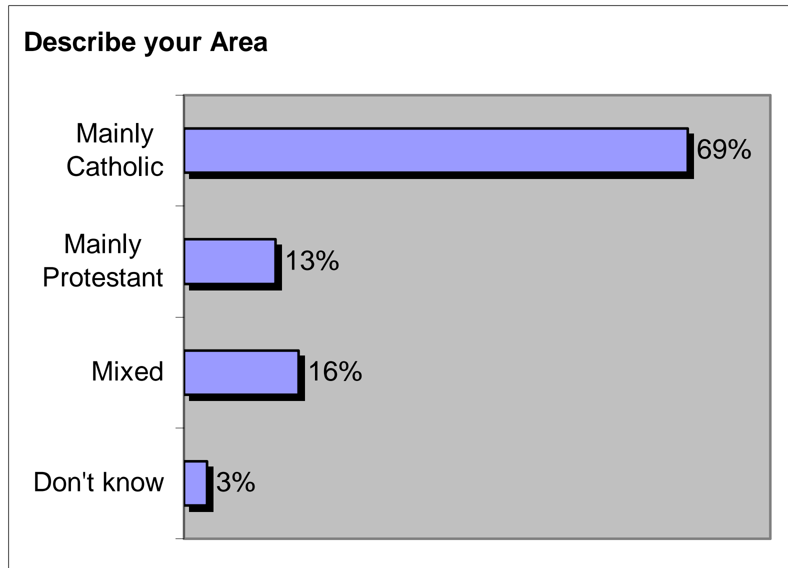




Respondents had lived in Northern Ireland for between 14 and 25 years, with an average of 18.13 years spent living in the province.

When asked to identify the place they live in, the majority of youths, over half of respondents, reported that they lived in a small city or town (56%). With almost a fifth (19%) reporting that they lived in a big city, the participants of the study can be considered primarily urban residents: three-quarters of them (75%) living in a big city, a small city or a town. One in five respondents (22%) could likewise be classed as rural dwellers: 19% living in the country and 3% living in a country village.

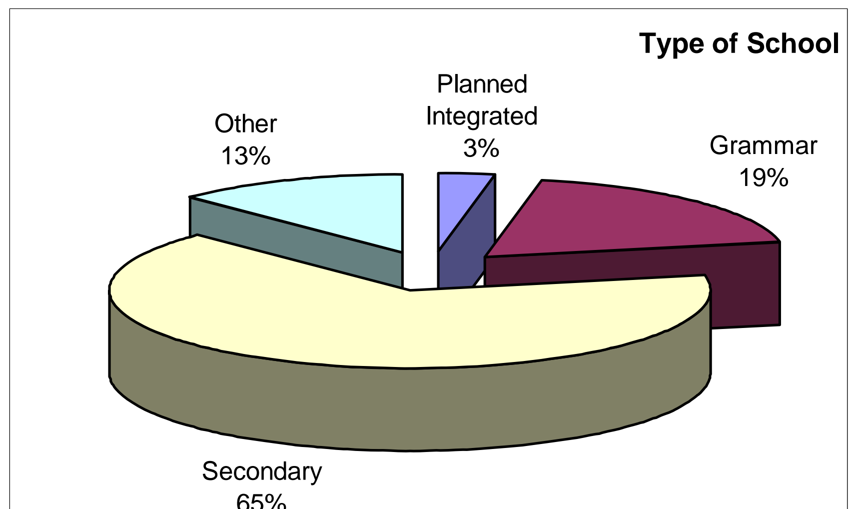


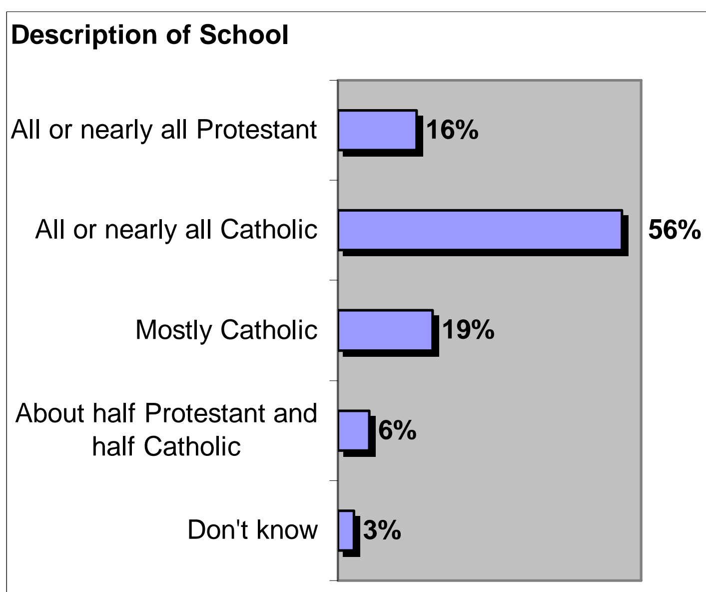


Participants were asked to describe their area. Three out of five participants (69%) reported that they live in a mainly Catholic area. One in ten (13%) respondents described their area as mainly Protestant, and just 16% as a mixed area. These findings are likely to be reflective of the high percentage of Catholic participants (see below).

School Experiences

The majority of participants, almost two-thirds, attend Secondary school (65%). Almost a fifth attend Grammar school, 13% attend schools of other types, and just 3% planned integrated schools.





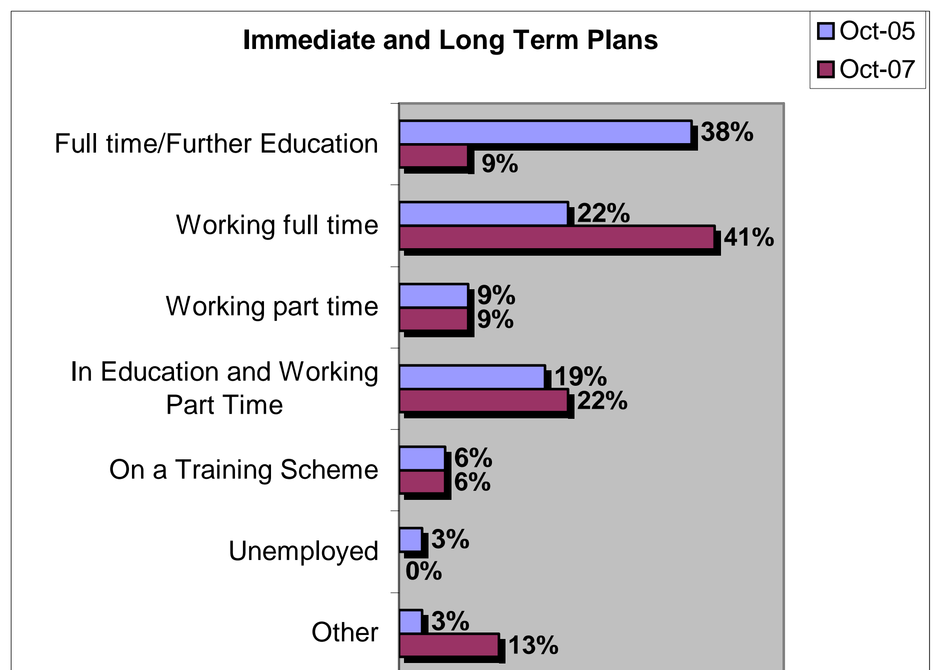
When asked to describe their school, over half of respondents (56%) reported attending an 'all or nearly all' Catholic school, and almost a further fifth (19%) reported attending a mostly Catholic school. This accounts for three quarters (75%) of the participants attending predominantly Catholic schools, but this is

most likely a reflection of the religious make-up of the participants, which is mainly Catholic (see below). Just 16% of the participants attend predominantly Protestant schools, while a mere 6% attend schools that are balanced in religious make up.

Participants in the study were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements about school. Overall, the results reveal a primarily positive view of the respondents' school experiences. Over three quarters of participants (76%) said they were not bored at school. Seven out of ten (71%) youths taking part agreed that some teachers had really inspired them at school, and three out of five (63%) reported enjoying learning at school. In terms of the practicality of their education, seven out of ten (73%) disagreed that school was all listening and very little doing, while a smaller majority, 59%, agreed that school had given them skills and knowledge that would be required later in life. The majority of participants, four out of five in fact (87%), felt that school taught them to think for themselves, while over half of them (58%) agreed that school had opened their mind and made them want to learn.

Ambitions and Aspirations

Participants were asked about their plans for the immediate and long-term future. They were asked what they thought they would be doing in the October immediately after the survey, and what they thought they would be doing at the same point in five years time. In terms of immediate plans, the majority of respondents thought they would be continuing or furthering their education (38%). Along with those who thought they would be in education and working part time (19%), this accounts for over half of all respondents (57%). Working full time (22%) and working part time (9%) accounted for the next largest proportion of respondents, giving a total of just 31% of respondents envisaging being employed in the coming Autumn. This may be due to the age of the cohort, although the figure of 3% envisaging unemployment as a likely prospect is concerning.

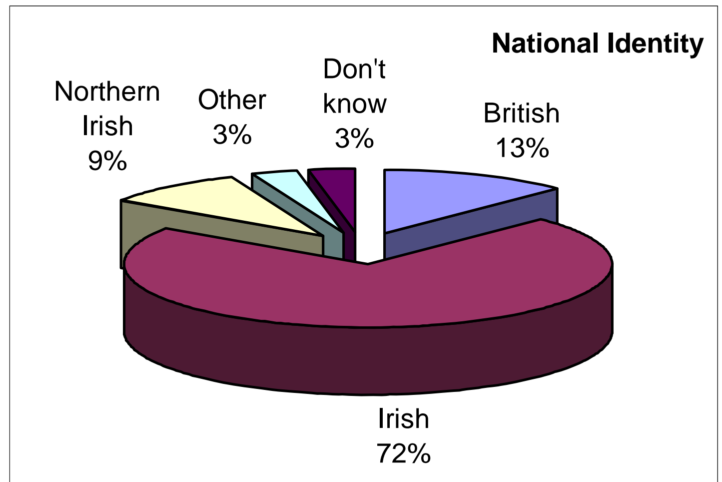


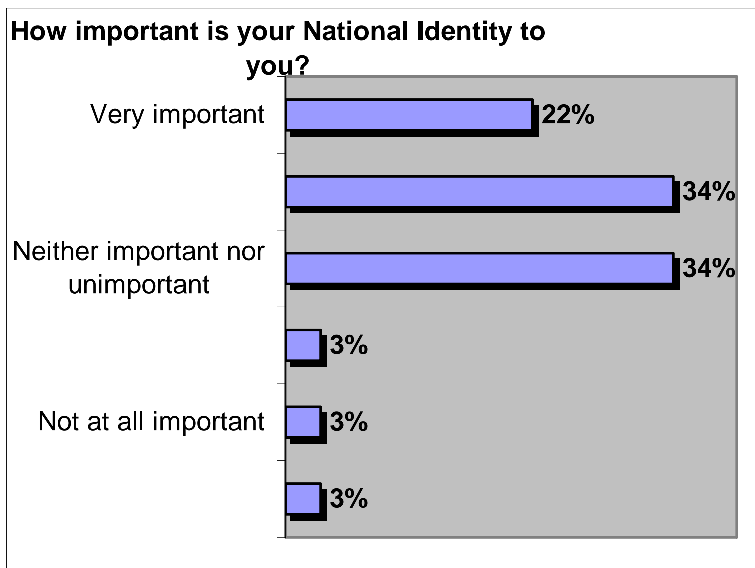
In contrast to their plans for the immediate future, the participants' plans for five years' time display a much lower belief/intention to be in education: with just 9% envisaging being in full time education and 22% believing it likely they will be in education and working part time, one in three participants (31%) think they will be continuing their education in five years time. A much higher proportion, however, see

themselves as being employed in five years: with one in four (41%) seeing themselves in full time work and 9% believing they will be working part time, half of respondents envisage being employed in five years. Again, this could be reflective of the age of the participants, but in conjunction with the fact that none of the respondents believed they would be unemployed in October 2007, the results signal optimism.

National Identity

Participants were asked how they thought of themselves. Seven out of ten respondents (72%) viewed themselves as Irish, one in ten (13%) viewed themselves as British and less than one in ten, just 9% perceived themselves as Northern Irish.

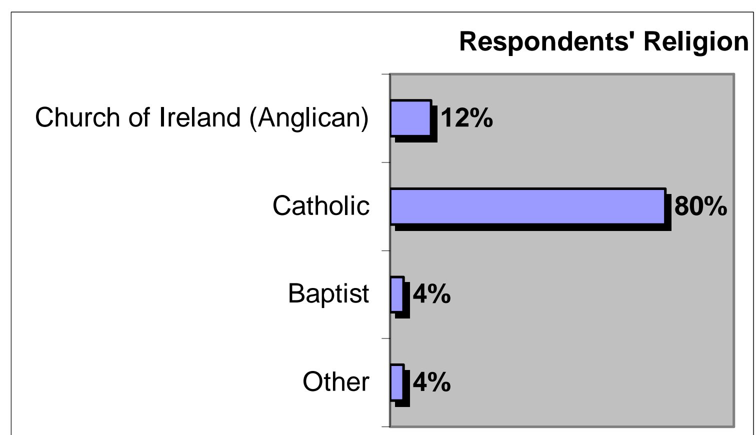




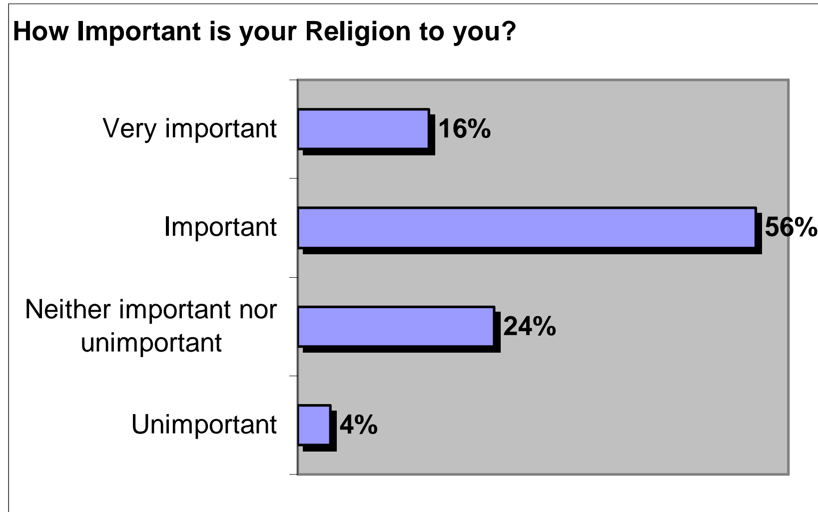
When asked about the significance of their national identity, one in five (22%) thought it very important and one in three (34%) thought it quite important; this means that national identity is significant to over half of respondents (56% overall). In contrast, one in three saw their national identity as 'neither important nor unimportant', while just 6% attached little or no significance to it.

Religious Identity

When asked whether they saw themselves as belonging to any particular religion, over three quarters

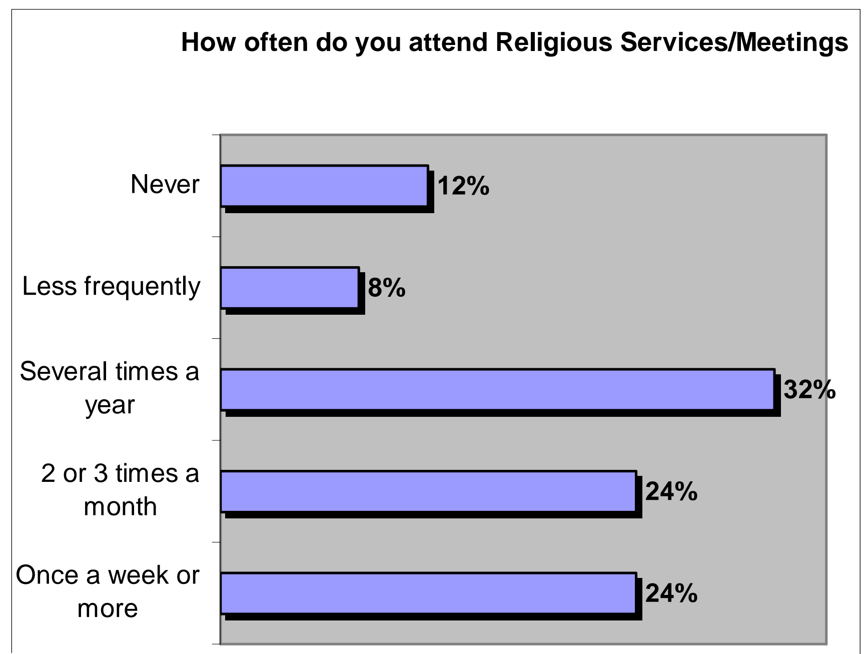


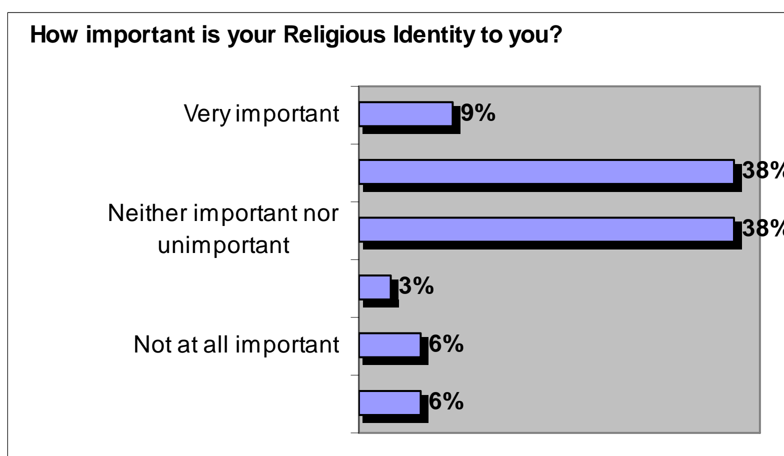
of respondents (78%) reported that they did. Respondents were then asked which religion they would regard themselves as. Interestingly, those who said they did not perceive themselves as belonging to any religion still identified a religion they considered themselves to belong to. Four out of five (80%) participants in the study reported being Catholic, with the other proportion made up of Church of Ireland (12% or one in ten), Baptist and Other.



When asked how important their religion was to them, just 4% suggested it was of no significance. In contrast, one out of two (56%) of respondents saw their religious identity as important while one in ten (16%) saw it as very important, accounting for seven out of ten (72%) overall seeing religion as of some importance. Just less than a quarter (24%) of respondents thought religion was neither important nor unimportant.

Respondents were then asked about how regularly they attend religious meetings or services. One in five participants (20%) never attend such services/meetings or attend them less than a few times a year. Just less than a third (32%) attend several times a year, while almost half (48%) could be considered regular attendants, going between once a week and several times a month.



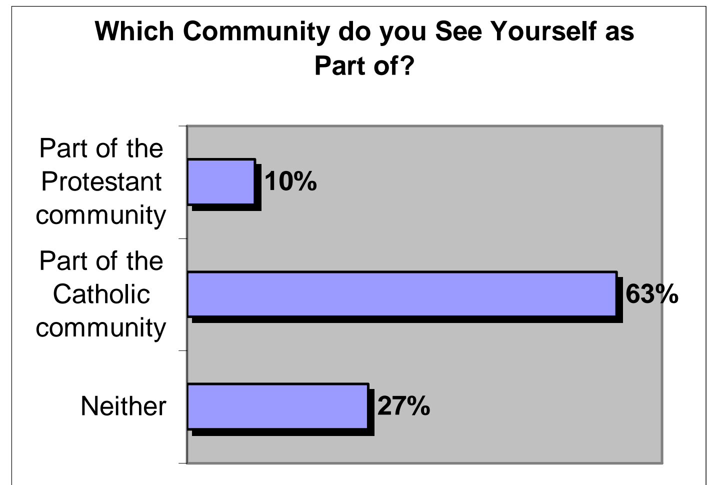


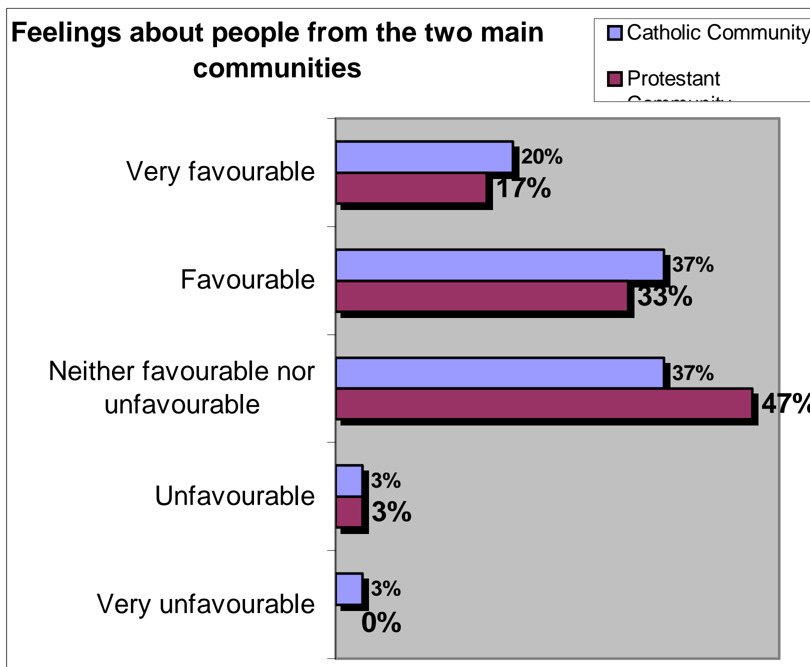
Interestingly, when asked how

important their religion was to them, the exact same proportion of respondents who felt their religion was quite important (38%) also felt that religion was neither important nor unimportant. Similarly, while 9% of participants felt their religious identity was very important to them, 9% felt it was not very (3%) or not at all (6%) important.

Communities and Contact

When asked what community they saw themselves as part of, three out of five (63%) of participants reported perceiving themselves as part of the Catholic community. Again, this must be seen as a reflection of the sample. While one in ten (10%) saw themselves as part of the Protestant community, one in four (27%) viewed themselves as part of neither community, perhaps signalling a down turn in traditional sectarian affiliation.



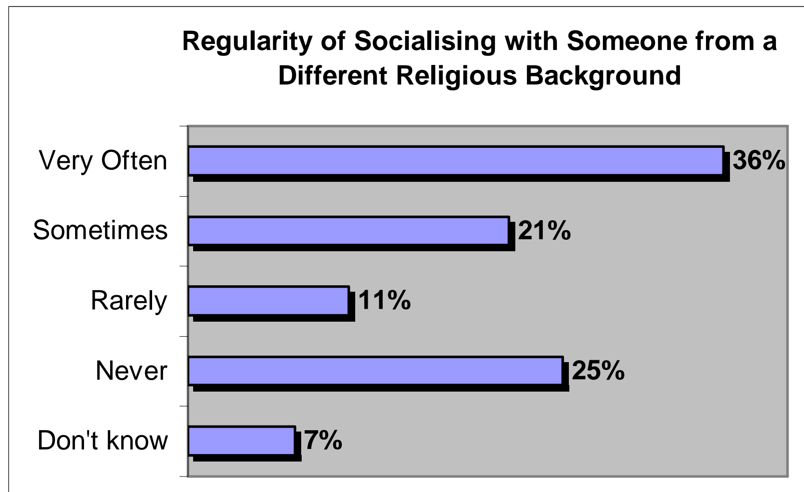


When asked how they felt about people from each of the two main communities in Northern Ireland, participants' responses were mostly positive or neutral. One in five respondents (20%) viewed the Catholic community 'very favourably', while one in three (37%) viewed it 'favourably'; overall then one in two respondents (57%) viewed the Catholic community positively. One in three (37%) expressed a neutral view of the catholic community, while 6% viewed it 'unfavourably' or 'very unfavourably'.

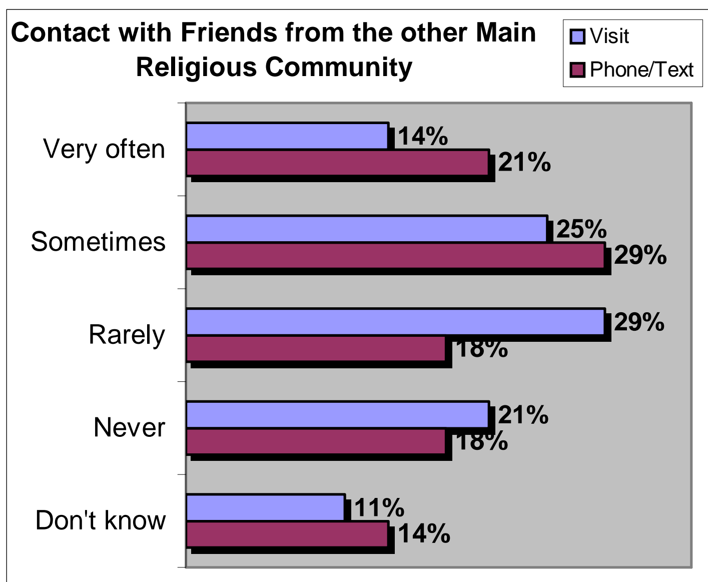
One in two (50%) of participants viewed the Protestant community either 'very favourably' (17%) or 'favourably' (33%). Almost half of respondents (47%) expressed a neutral view of the Protestant community, 3% expressed a negative view, seeing the community 'unfavourably', while no participants viewed the Protestant

community 'very unfavourably'. When asked if they had any contact with pupils from the other religious community, three in five respondents (64%) suggested they do, one in five suggested they do not (21%) and 14% said they did not know. The latter response may be a reflection of the declining significance of knowing someone's religion, although there is no way to prove this.

Participants were also asked if they had ever attended a Cross-community project, and 64%, or three out of five, had. Of those who had attended such a project, four out of five (80%) had viewed the experience either positively or very positively.



When asked how often they socialise with people from a different religious community, over a third of respondents (36%) reported doing so very often and over a fifth (21%) doing so sometimes. Overall then, over half of respondents (57%) have regular contact with individuals from a religious background other than their own. Over a third (36%), however have little (11%) or no (25%) such contact. With 7% saying they don't know, this could again be a reflection of the declining importance of knowing someone's religious orientation. When asked how many friends from the other community respondents had, a worrying one in four (25%) reported having none, while two out of five (40%) had between 1 and 5 such friends. One in four (25%) had 6 or more such friends, with 11% saying they did not know.

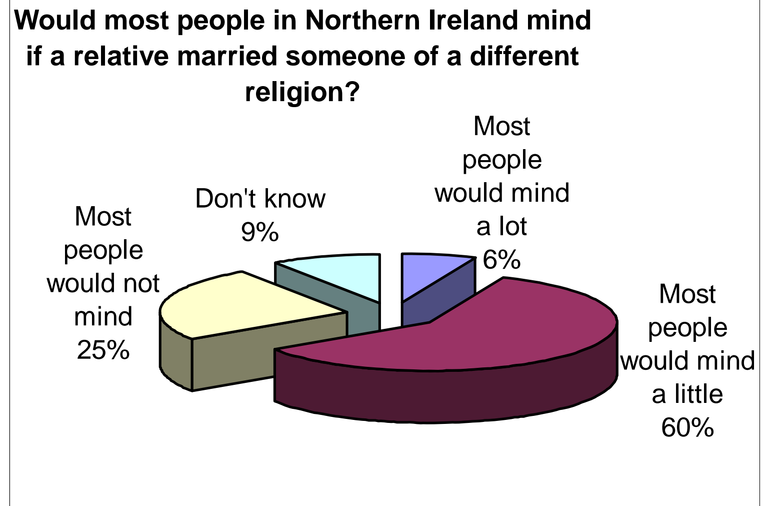


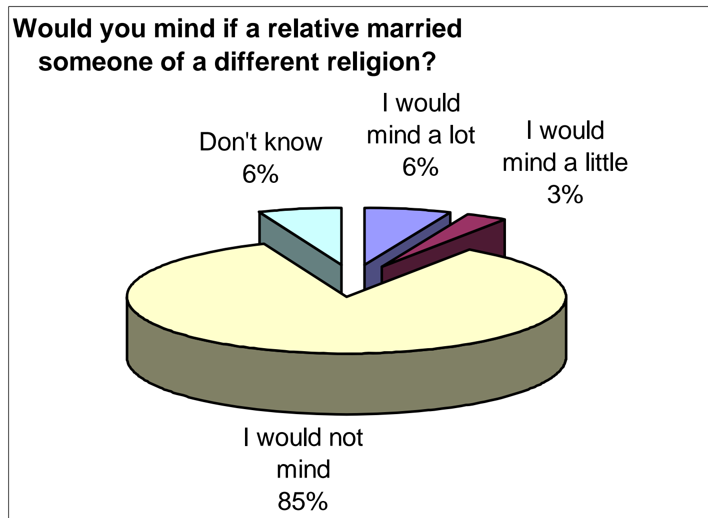
When asked about how often they would visit or phone/text friends from the other main religious community, responses ranged across a spectrum. Those who visited very often (14%) or sometimes (25%) accounted for more than a third of responses (39%). Over half of respondents (50%), however, suggested they would rarely (29%) or never (21%) visit the homes of friends from the other main religious

community. In terms of calling or texting friends, half of respondents (50%) reported they would sometimes (29%) or often (21%) have such contact, while over a third (36%) suggested they would rarely (18%) or never (18%) have such contact.

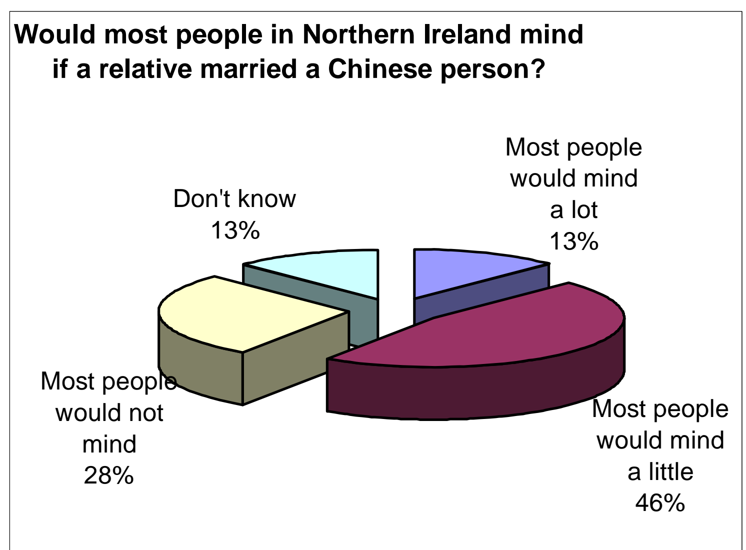
Attitudes to Different Communities

Participants were asked if they thought most people in the Province would mind or not mind if one of their close relatives married someone of a different religion. They were then asked if they themselves would mind or not mind this. Interestingly, respondents thought the same proportion of people would 'mind a lot' (6%), as thought they themselves would 'mind a lot' (also 6%).

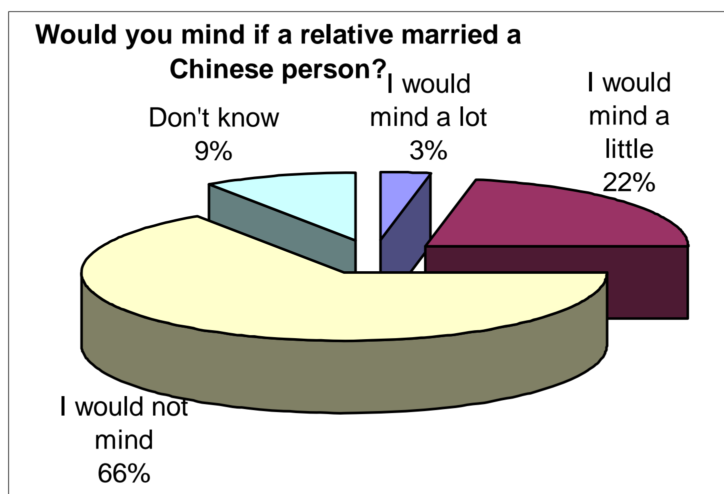




There were, however, some very large divergences in responses relating to 'would mind a little', and 'would not mind'. Respondents thought that three out of five people (60%) would be concerned ('would mind') about a relative marrying someone of a different religion, while they reported just 3% of themselves being concerned to the same degree. Respondents also thought that one in four (25%) of the population of Northern Ireland would not be concerned about such a marriage, while they reported that four out of five (85%) of they themselves would be unconcerned.

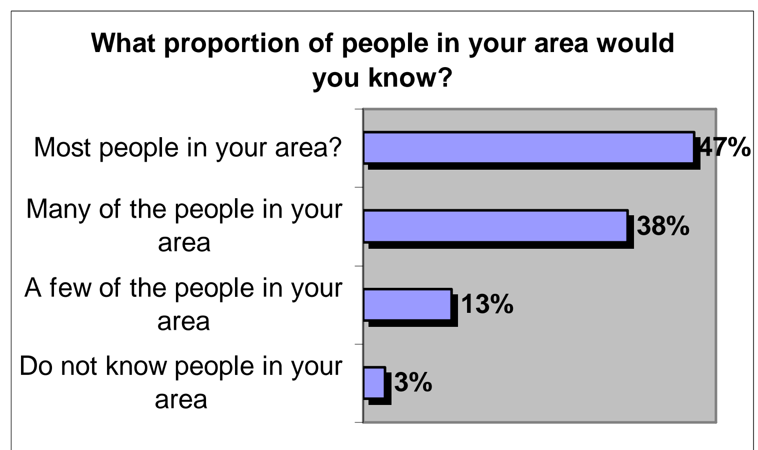


Participants were then asked whether most people in the Province, and they themselves, would mind or not mind if a close relative married a Chinese person. Just 3% of respondents reported that they would be concerned about such a marriage (below), while they thought that 13% of the general population would mind (right). The youths in the study thought that almost half (46%) of the general population would be a little concerned if a close relative married a Chinese person, while they reported that just a fifth (22%) of they themselves would be concerned by such a marriage. Finally, the participants thought that just over a quarter (28%) of people in the province would not mind such a marriage in their family, while two-thirds (66%) of they themselves would not mind.

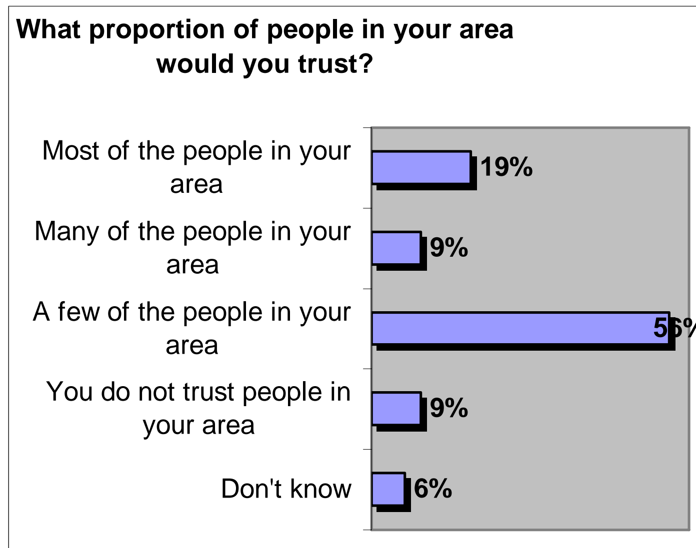


Trust and Security in the Local Community

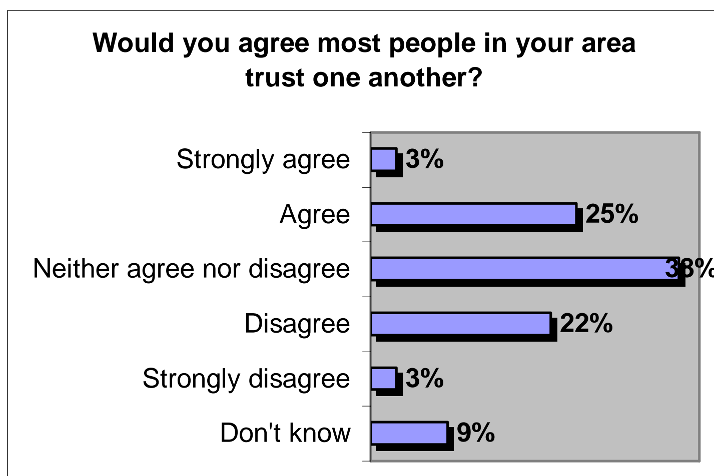
Participants were asked several questions about their neighbourhood. When asked what proportion of people in the local area they would know, almost a half of respondents (47%) reported that they know most of the people in the local area, and over a third (38%) said they know many of the people in the area. Just 3% said they did not know people in the local area. Over half of respondents (53%) agreed or strongly agreed that their area is a tight-knit community, while a fifth (22%) disagreed. Three out of five respondents (63%) either agreed or strongly agreed that their area was a friendly



place to live and just 9% of them did not agree that their local area was a friendly place to live.



When asked what proportion of local people they would trust, one in four (28%) participants reported that they would trust many (9%) or most (19%) of locals, one in two (56%) said they would trust only a few, and 9% said they do not trust people in their area.(Right) When asked whether their area was a place where local people look after each other, almost half (47%) agreed or strongly agreed. Just 9% disagreed.



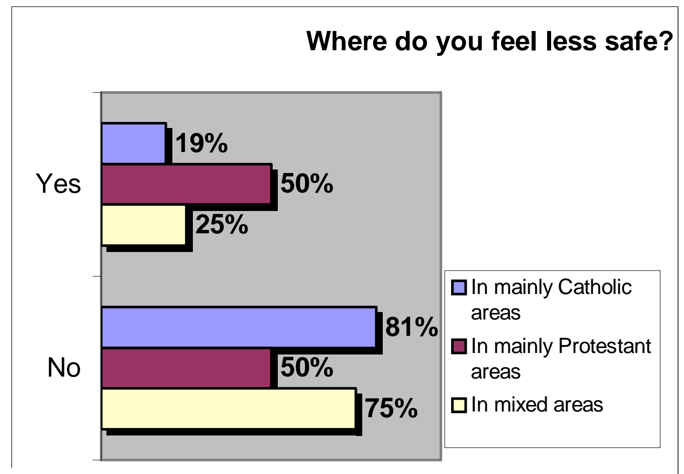
When asked to agree or disagree with the statement that most people in their local area trust one another, respondents appeared to be quite evenly divided. While over a third of participants (38%) neither agreed nor disagreed, 25% agreed and 22% disagreed. A further 3% each strongly agreed and strongly disagreed.

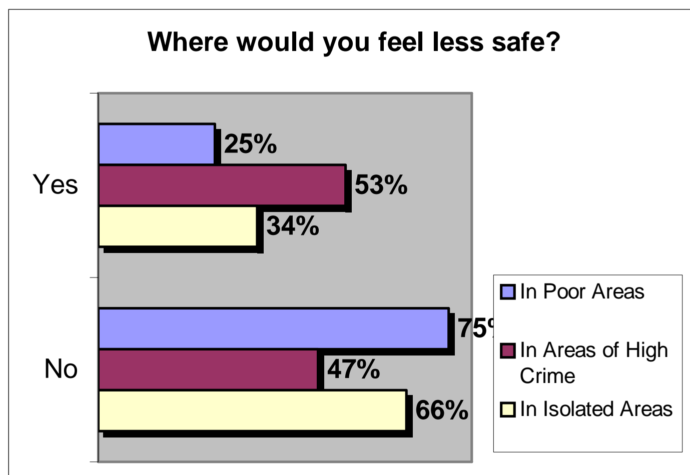
When asked how often they see their neighbours, three out of five participants (60%) reported seeing their neighbours 5 days a week or more often. Just 3% said they hadn't seen their neighbours in the last 12 months. When asked whether they would often see strangers in their area, one in four (25%) participants agreed or strongly agreed that they would, while one in three (34%) disagreed.

Participants were asked how safe they feel walking

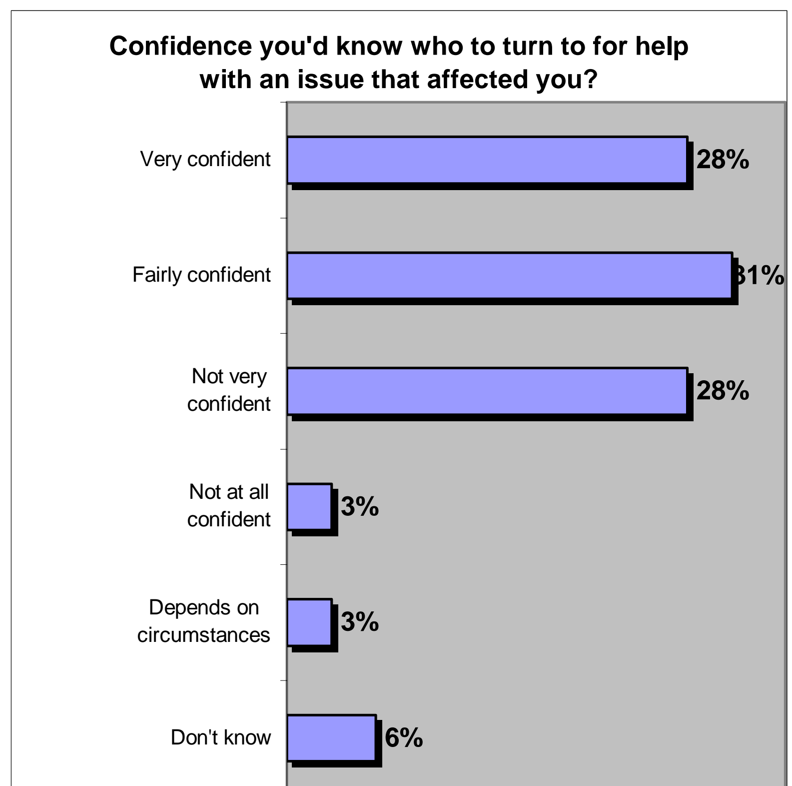
alone in their area, both during the day and after dark. The vast majority, over three quarters of respondents (78%) reported feeling very or fairly safe walking through their area during the day. Just less than a fifth of respondents (19%) reported feeling a bit or very unsafe in the same situation. After dark, more than half of respondents (56%) still reported feeling fairly or very safe, while 35% suggested feeling a bit or very unsafe.

The survey asked the participating youths where they felt less safe. The results show that the majority of respondents felt less secure in mainly Protestant areas (50%), followed by mixed areas (25%) and then mainly Catholic areas (19%). Again, the largely Catholic sample could have a huge effect on these results.





When we compare the results of the last graph with those on the left, we see that areas of high crime (53%) were the areas respondents reported made them feel least secure, just a few percent higher than the 'mainly Protestant areas' above. Isolated areas (34%) made one in three respondents feel less than safe, and poor areas (25%) were felt unsafe by one in four participants.



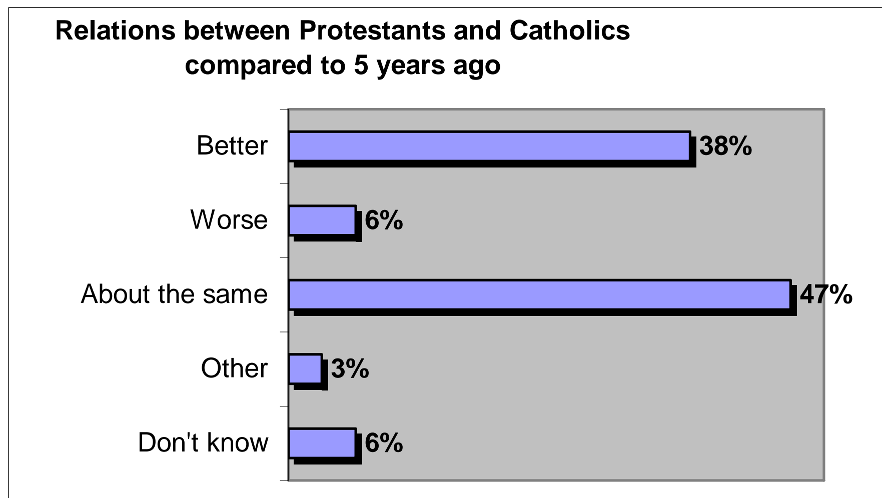
The survey asked participants how confident they are that they would know who to turn to for help if they were faced with an issue that affected them personally, an important indicator of social support networks. As can be seen

(right), more than half of respondents (59% in total) felt very confident or fairly confident that they would know who to turn to. Almost a third though (31%) reported being not very or not at all confident that they would.

Community Relations

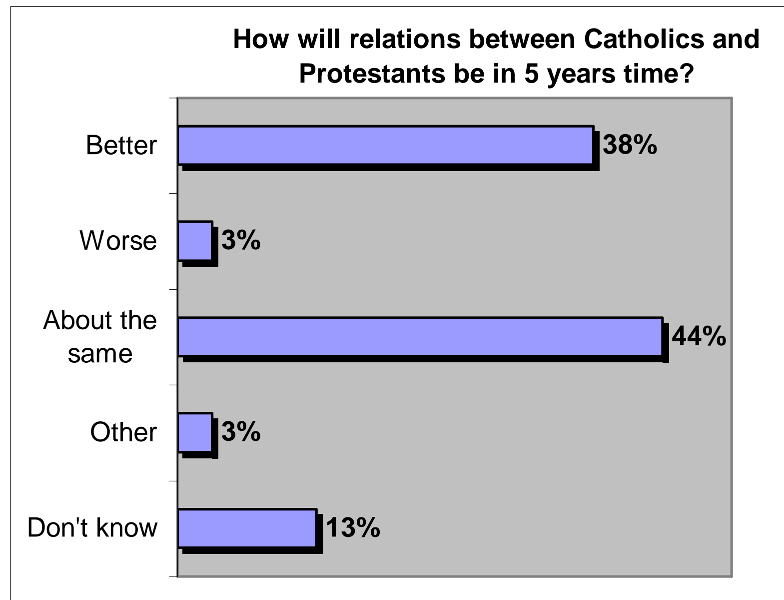
Participants were asked whether there had been a time in the last year when they had felt intimidated or threatened by murals, kerb paintings or flags. When asked about Republican murals, painting or flags, just 19% said they had felt threatened or intimidated while 81%, four out of five respondents, said they had not. When asked about Loyalist murals, painting or flags, 39% said they had felt intimidated or threatened while 61%, three out of five respondents, said they had not. Even accounting for the vast majority of self-identified Catholic respondents within the sample, it is clear that the majority of participants have not felt intimidated by such cultural representations.

When asked if there had been a time in the last year when they had felt intimidated or threatened because people were wearing certain football strips, three out of four respondents (77%) said there had not, while one in five (23%) said there had.

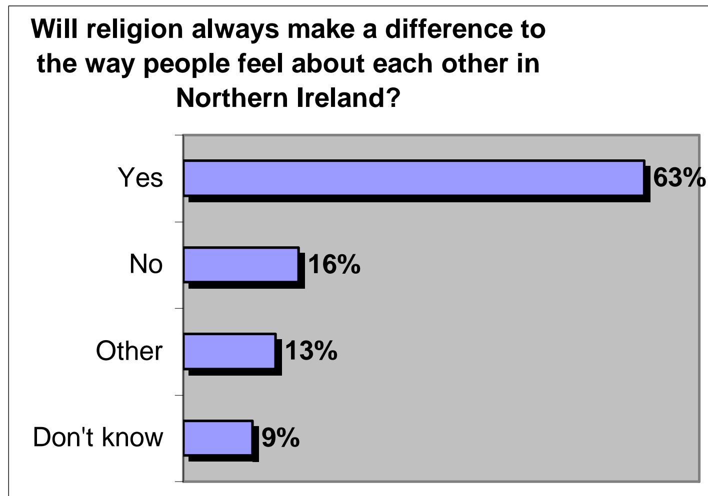


Participants were asked about relations between Protestants and Catholics in comparison with five years ago. More than a third (38%) of those responding to the question felt such relations had improved, while just 6% thought that they had deteriorated. Almost half of respondents (47%) thought that relations between the two communities were about the same as they had been five years previously, which signals a view of a stagnant situation.

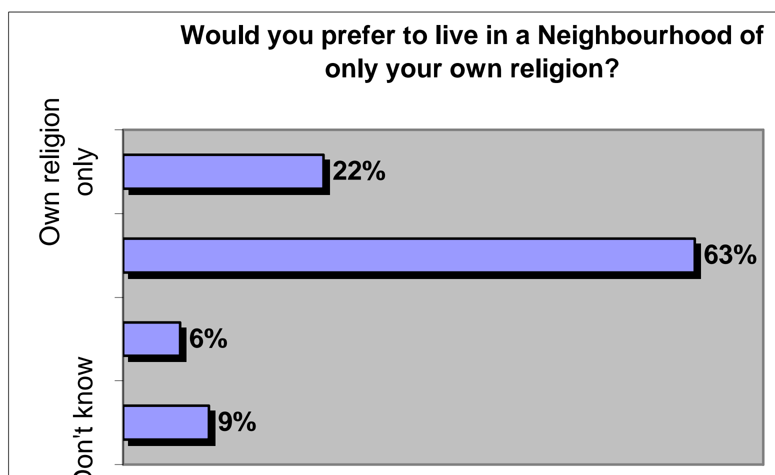
When asked how they thought relations between Protestants and Catholics would be in five years time, over a third (38%) felt such relations would improve, interestingly exactly the same proportion of respondents as thought relations had improved in the last five years. However, just half the proportion who thought relations had got worse in the last five years thought that relations would deteriorate in the next five years. Two out of five respondents (44%) thought there would be little change in relations, just lower than the proportion who had perceived little change in the last five years.



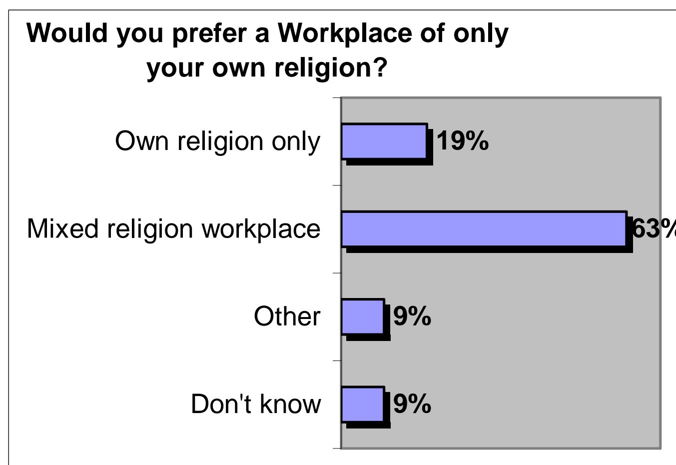
When asked if they thought religion would always make a difference to the way people in the Province feel about each other, three out of five (63%) respondents thought that it would. Just 16% of participants thought that religion would not always affect the way people in Northern Ireland feel about each other. This signifies that the majority of youths participating in the study cannot perceive of a Northern Ireland that is not divided along religious grounds.



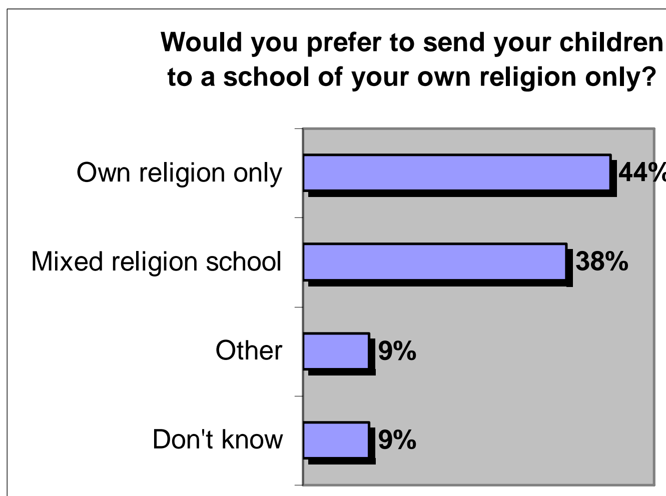
However, when asked if they would prefer to live in a neighbourhood of only their own religion or of mixed religions, the majority of youths participating in the study opted for a mixed religion neighbourhood. Three out of five (63%), in fact reported a preference for a mixed neighbourhood, while just one out of five reported a preference for living



in a neighbourhood of their own religion only.



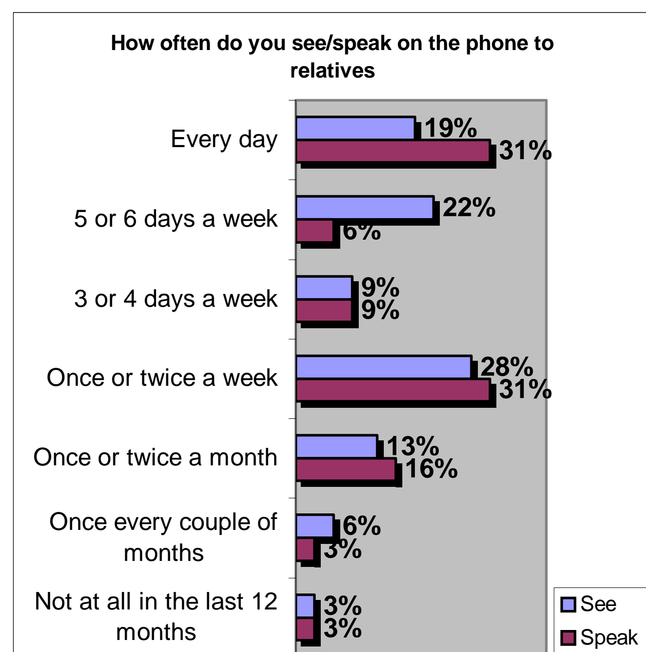
The results were very similar when the participants were asked if they would prefer a workplace of their own religion only or of a mixed nature. Again, three out of five participants (63%) expressed a preference for a mixed religion workplace (the same percentage as stated a preference for a mixed religion neighbourhood), while 22% expressed a preference for a workplace of their own religion only.

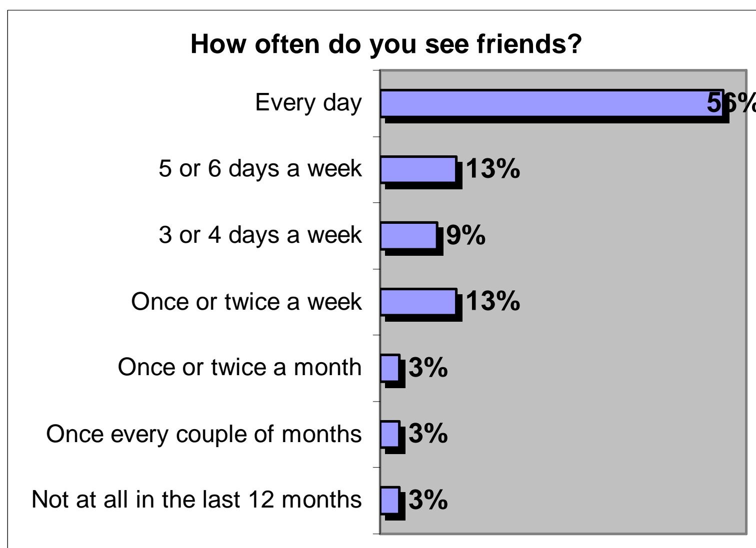


When asked if they would prefer to send their children to a school of their own religion only or a mixed school, the results were less divided: two out of five (44%) respondents stated a preference for schools of their own religion, while one in three (38%) opted for a mixed school.

Family and Friends

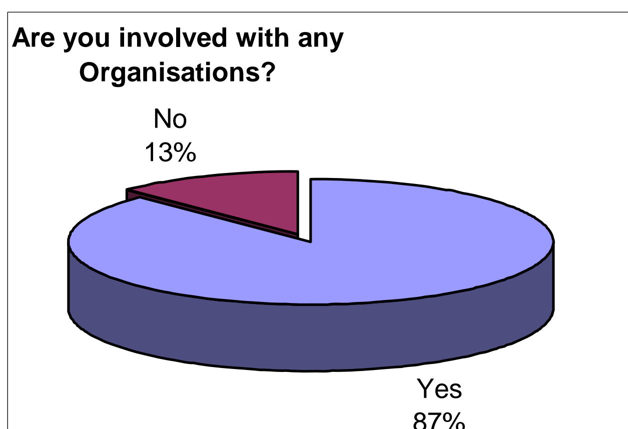
Participants were asked how often they see relatives, and how often they speak to relatives on the phone. The results (left) show that the vast majority of the youths participating in the study both see and speak to their relatives once a week or more. Three out of four participants (78%) see their relatives between once a week and every day, while the same proportion (77%) speaks to their relatives once a week or more often. Just 3% of respondents suggested they had not seen their relatives in the last 12 months, while the same percentage. Just 3%, said they had not spoken to relatives in the last year.



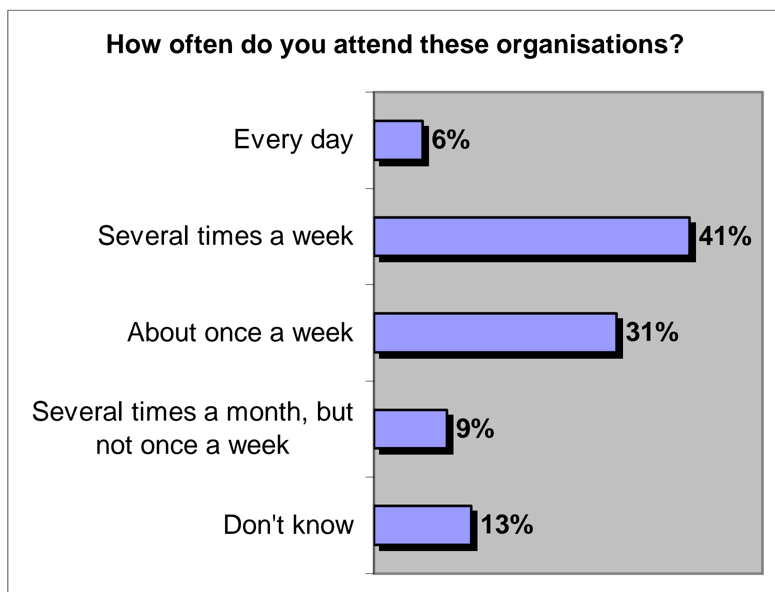


The survey also asked participants how often they see friends. While more than half (56%) of respondents reported seeing their friends every day, nine out of ten (91%) reported seeing friend at least once a week. A small proportion of respondents suggested they only see friends once or twice a month (3%) or once every couple of months (3%).

Involvement with Organisations and Associations

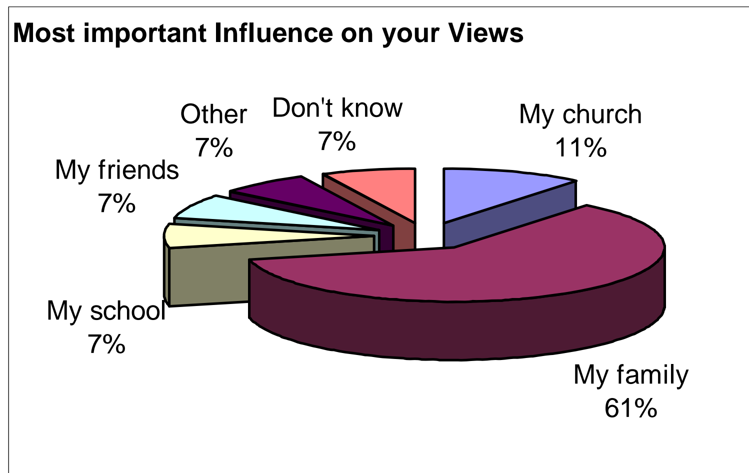


The survey asked participants if they were involved with a series of social organisations and associations. Four out of five (87%) participants reported being involved with an organisation of some sort. One third (34%) of participating youths reported belonging to a social club. Two out of five (44%) participants reported being a member of a Sport or hobby club, while just 9% reported belonging to a religious group.

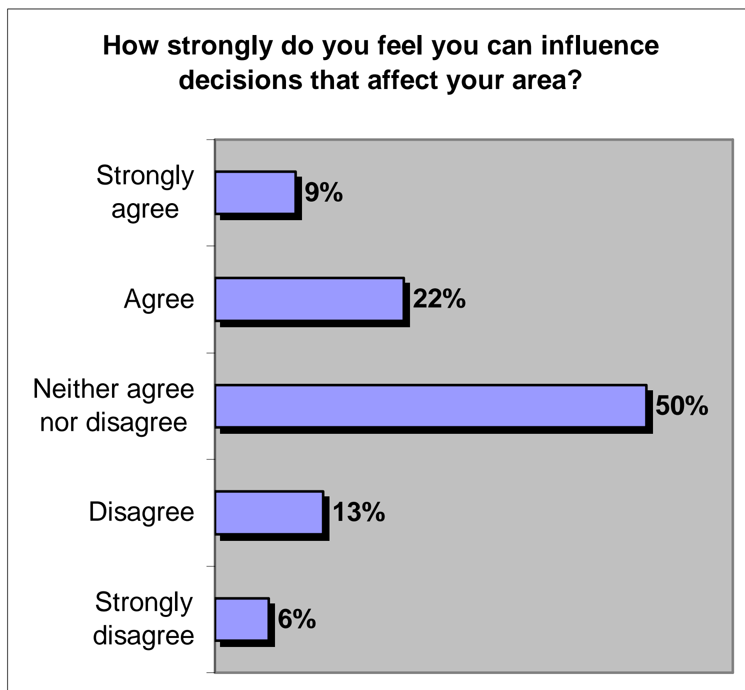


When asked how often they attend these organisations, more than three quarters of respondents (78%) reported that they attend once a week or more.

Influences



The survey asked participants what they thought had been the biggest influence on the views they hold about other religious communities. Three out of five participants (61%) felt their family had been most influential, while one in ten (11%) thought that their church had



Participants were also asked whether they felt they could influence decisions that affect their area. The results show many respondents unsure about their level of influence, as evidenced by the 50% who neither agree nor disagree. Almost a third (31%), however, agreed or strongly agreed that they could influence such decisions, while less than a fifth (19%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, feeling they could not influence such decisions.

CONCLUSION

"If we wish to create a lasting peace, we must begin with the children."

Mahatma Gandhi

'Conflict resolution means terminating conflict by methods that are analytical and that get to the root of the problem. Conflict resolution, as opposed to mere management or 'settlement', points to an outcome that, in the view of the parties involved, is a permanent solution to a problem.' (Burton, 1991)

What is the root of the problem of sectarianism? There are many within the community relations industry who would argue that there are several, each being legitimate and justifiable. Before we survey the key components outlined by previous research, a comprehensive theoretical review of the literature must be conducted to explain our study findings.

Micro Theories of Conflict

In Seville, Spain in 1986 a group of scientists met to explore the sources of human aggression. John E. Mack explains the results of the Seville Statement of Violence:
In the Seville Statement the signatories, who included psychologists, neuroscientists, geneticists, anthropologists, and political scientists, declared that there was no scientific basis for considering human beings innately aggressive animals, inevitably committed to war on the basis of biological nature. Rather, they said, war and sectarianism is a result of socialization and conditioning, a phenomenon of human organization, planning, and information processing that plays on emotional and motivational potentialities. In short, the Seville Statement implies that we have real choices and that a new kind of responsibility in the conduct of human group life is possible.

The significance of the Seville Statement are the implications for the explanation, conduct, and resolution of human conflict. The Seville Statement gets to the core of one of the central debates in conflict theory research: are the roots of human conflict to be found within nature (genetic) or nurture (the environment). The Seville scientists have firmly concluded on the side of nurture.

Like most pioneering theories, the innate theories gave way to more sophisticated and scientific hypotheses over time. One important development of this work was the evolution of the Frustration- Aggression theory. The basic assumption of the Frustration-Aggression theory is that all aggression, whether interpersonal or international, has its root causes in the frustration of one or more actors' goal achievement. That is to say that conflict and its sectarianism can be traced to the unfulfilment of personal or group objectives and the frustration that this breeds. Since the demand for basic human needs has always exceeded the supply, all human conflict

can be traced to an actor's failure to obtain what it needs. The Frustration-Aggression theory rests on the basic stimulus-response hypothesis.

The questions that this theory raise are: does all frustration lead automatically to aggression, and can all aggression and conflict be traced to some catalytic frustration? These questions, as well as the challenge of insufficiency of causal link to aggression, and other insights into human behaviour have lead to the discrediting of the Frustration-Aggression theory and the subsequent development of the Social Learning and Social Identity theories.

Social learning theory is based on the hypothesis that aggression is not innate or instinctual but actually learned through the process of socialisation. This hypothesis is the contention of the Seville Statement. One acquires aggressive attributes by learning them at home, in school, and by interaction with their environment in general. Interaction in society helps to focus and trigger stored aggression onto enemies. This is an important concept, particularly when the conflict is ethno-national or sectarian in nature.

Social learning theorists have tried to understand the relationship of the individual in their environment and how this relates to group aggression. Socialisation into a violent environment like West Belfast has detrimental effects on childhood development. This is the precursor to aggressive and anti-social behaviour in the teen and early adult years. Children who grow up watching their parents and neighbours being hassled by the police, army or 'other' community often become petrol bomb wielding teens. This aggression can escalate if unchecked or encouraged.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) was developed by psychologist Henri Tajfel, and it offers insight into the conflict in Northern Ireland. Ed Cairns, a psychologist at the University of Ulster, has noted the importance of this theory: "What is different and important about Social Identity Theory is that it is based on normal psychological processes that operate under all circumstances not just under conditions of intergroup conflict." We create our social identities in order to simplify our external relations. Further, there is a human need for positive self esteem and self worth, which we transfer to our own groups. We also order our environment by social comparison between groups. The concept of ingroups and outgroups is important in this analysis. Cairns explains another important concept from Social Identity Theory:

What Social Identity Theory has helped social psychologists at least to recognize that individuals are different in groups and that it is this difference which produces recognizable forms of group action. . . . In other words what Social Identity Theory has done is outline a process which places the individual in the group and at the same time places the group in the individual.

Group relations are, of course, at the root of the problems in Northern Ireland. At the core are relations between the minority and majority communities. Tajfel outlines the importance of stability and legitimacy with regard to majority / minority group relations:

There is little doubt that an unstable system of social divisions between a majority and a minority is more likely to be perceived as illegitimate than a stable one; and that,

conversely, a system perceived as illegitimate will contain the seeds of instability. It is this interaction between the perceived instability and illegitimacy of the system of differentials which is likely to become a powerful ingredient of the transition from the minority's acceptance of the status quo to the rejection of it.

Consequently, groups place importance on the perceived legitimacy within their social environments. Legitimacy is an important concept for Northern Ireland because nationalists do not perceive the state to be legitimate. As Tajfel observes:
The perceived illegitimacy of an intergroup relationship is thus socially and psychologically the accepted and acceptable lever for social action and social change in intergroup behaviour. . . . In the case of groups which are "inferior", the leverage function is fulfilled by the perceived illegitimacy of the outcomes of intergroup comparisons; in the case of "inferior" groups which are already on their way towards change, it is the legitimization of their new comparative image; in the case of groups which are "superior" it is the legitimization of the attempts to preserve a status quo of value distinctiveness whenever this is perceived as under threat.

The perceived illegitimacy of group relations in Northern Ireland by Catholics was a significant factor that lead to the development of the civil rights campaign in 1967-9. The 'inferior' Catholics were challenging their relationship with the 'superior' Protestants. The Protestants attempted to preserve the status quo of their hegemony which was under threat. Because the successive governments of O'Neill, Chichester-Clark and Faulkner could not manage this change adequately, the situation changed from competition to conflict and violence soon erupted. This theme of the illegitimacy of 'inferior' and 'superior' group statuses between the minority and majority has been prevalent in the intragroup relations in Northern Ireland since the creation of the state in 1921.

Therefore, for nationalists, opposition to the state is legitimised. Since the state is not perceived as legitimate, neither is the state's monopoly on the use of force (violence). Republicans rationalise their use of violence to overthrow what they perceive to be an illegitimate state. The individual's environment is determined by a myriad of social identities that people perceive. For example, ethnic identities are very strong because of their composition as extended kinship groups. These kinship groups are important in the development of ingroups and outgroups. This is a particularly important concept when dealing with ethnic conflict. Thus the socialisation process, group comparisons, perceptions and positive identities are important concepts for conflict resolution.

Macro Theories Of Conflict

Macro theory focuses on the interaction of groups, specifically on the conscious level. Early political theorists, from Thucidydes and Sun Tsu to Machiavelli and von Clausewitz, have chosen one particular element to concentrate on: power. The use and exercise of power is a central concept of macro theory of conflict. Macro theorists would agree that power comes in many forms: economic, political, military, even cultural

Within macro theory there is an important set of concepts that can be derived from the study of ethnic conflict. This is of importance to Northern Ireland because the same

concepts are applicable to sectarian conflict. Whether one defines the conflict in Northern Ireland as ethnic (between Irish 'Gaels' or 'Celts' and British 'Anglo-Saxons') or as sectarian (between Catholics and Protestants), it makes little theoretical difference as the conceptions for ethnic and sectarian conflict operate in the same manner. What is important is that these groups of people have categorised themselves as distinct groups and they view each other as the *outgroup* or *enemy*

In severely divided societies, ethnicity finds its way into a myriad of issues: development plans, educational controversies, trade union affairs, land policy, business policy, tax policy. Characteristically, issues that would elsewhere be relegated to the category of routine administration assume a central place on the political agenda of ethnically divided societies.

This is certainly the case in Northern Ireland, where every public issue becomes a focus of ethno-national conflict. Before the Troubles began the key issues were housing, job discrimination and political gerrymandering. As the conflict intensified, these issues all became entangled within the wider ethno-national conflict. This is one of the features that makes that conflict so complex and enduring. It permeates the very fabric of society to social lives and sport allegiances. This complexity is highlighted as a severe hindrance to conflict resolution by Professors Seamus Dunn and John Darby.

In summary, ethnic strife is too often superficially discerned as principally predicated upon language, religion, customs, economic inequality, or some other tangible element. But what is fundamentally involved in such a conflict is that divergence of basic identity which manifests itself in the "us-them" syndrome.

While such things as religion and economic deprivation may be important contributing factors to ethnic conflict, it is the opposition of national identities which define the conflict. Connor further underlines the importance of the depth of emotions in ethnic conflict:

Explanations of behavior in terms of pressure groups, elite ambitions, and rational choice theory hint not at all at the passions that motivate Kurdish, Tamil, and Tigre guerrillas or Basque, Corsican, Irish, and Palestinian terrorists. Nor at the passions leading to the massacre of Bengalis by Assamese or Punjabis by Sikhs. In short, these explanations are a poor guide to ethnonationally inspired behavior.

One can sense the depth of emotion and sheer intensity of the conflict by the atrocities that are carried out by the violent extremes of both communities. The IRA killed 11 civilians at a Remembrance Day celebration in Enniskillen in 1987. Loyalists killed eight people and injured 19 in Greysteel in 1993. What these events illustrate are the levels of hatred and violence that the conflict partners are willing to engage in. What is an adequate guide to ethnonational behaviour is their pursuit of their human needs in light of confrontation with competing ethnic groups within the confines of a single state. Unfortunately, in most cases this is perceived as a zero sum confrontation in which one group's gain is another group's loss.

A pattern of consistent variables begins to emerge. We can discern a convergence of thought on the importance of such concepts as identity and the dichotomy of us-them.

This dichotomy often leads to the perception of a zero-sum conflict. Most of the analysts also stress the importance of the depth of emotions associated with ethnonational conflict. Many also observe that there has been an over reliance on materialism as an explanatory concept

As Chateaubriand expressed it nearly 200 years ago: "Men don't allow themselves to be killed for their interests; they allow themselves to be killed for their passions." To phrase it differently: people do not voluntarily die for things that are rational. Perhaps the truth is that they only allow themselves to be killed for their needs.

As micro and macro theories to date have been insufficient to explain the conflict in Northern Ireland, then the search for a new paradigm should begin with a fusion or synthesis of both macro and micro theories.

Enemy System Theory

This has been used to explain terrorism and sectarianism in Northern Ireland, but it has not been widely adopted to explain the totality of the conflict. It is a key assumption of this study that use of concepts from the Enemy System Theory and the Human Needs Theory offer a comprehensive and balanced theoretical explanation of the conflict in Northern Ireland. It is hoped that this will further the development of a paradigm shift away from the current debate on internal-external explanations, and foster the development of a more comprehensive approach based on the fusion of micro and macro approaches to conflict theory as an explanation of the conflict.

The gist of the Enemy System Theory is the hypothesis that humans have a deep rooted psychological need to dichotomise and to establish enemies and allies.This phenomenon happens on individual and group levels. This is an unconscious need which feeds conscious relationships, especially in our group lives. This is especially important with regard to the formation of ethnic or national group identities and behaviour.

Identification with these ethnic or national groups largely determines how we relate to people within our *ingroups* and with those of our *outgroups*. How the masses within each group perceive themselves and their relationships with groups that they are associated with helps to determine whether their relationship will be based on cooperation, competition, or conflict. This is also determined by historic relations between these groups. Consequently, the theory combines concepts from individual and group psychology, as well as international relations theory

Thus, the theory is predicated on the relationships between intrapersonal concerns, the individual within their environment, as well as the interaction of individuals within groups and the actions between those groups. The following concepts comprise the Enemy System Theory.

The first concept is that of identity. Humans identify themselves as individuals and as members of groups of individuals there is an associated concept of the negative identity. This is when individuals suffer from low self esteem through narcissistic injuries. Instead of projecting negative images out, these images are saved for the self.

This often results in those who suffer from negative identity turning to maladaptive groups such as criminal and terrorist organisations to try to regain their lost self esteem. People at risk for such negative identities are usually found among the chronically unemployed (particularly working class), those with little or no educational qualifications, and from home environments that are broken or abusive. The next concept is that of *ethno-nationalism*. Ethno-nationalism is the identity of an individual to their ethnic or national group. Within Northern Ireland there are two distinctive and conflicting ethno-national groups. The emotions associated with ethnic identity are usually very strong and powerful.

Ethnic identities are often seen as extended kinship identities; this gives us a sense of a wider 'family' which contributes to our sense of belonging. This organising into ethnic groups puts these groups in competition. This competition can be either *adaptive*, such as the Olympic Games, or *maladaptive*, such as the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland. Ethno-national identity groups play a central role in Northern Ireland. The key constitutional issue divides the two conflicting identity groups: the Catholic-nationalist-Irish, from the Protestant-unionist-Ulster-British. Although these groups are not stagnant and monolithic, as has been the interpretation in the past, they remain relatively stable and become more salient when group stress polarises the communities. When groups are under political, economic, ecological, or military stress, they can become malicious. There is a tendency to strike at outgroups when this occurs. The Enemy System Theory offers a sophisticated theory of conflict which explains difficult problems such as terrorism and the depth of ethnic conflict. While it is a behavioural theory, it offers a bridge to classical theory by combining elements of developmental psychology with international relations theory. It transcends the realist paradigm in international relations theory by using communal or ethno-national groups as an important unit of analysis.

Conflict Resolution Theory

Whatever the definition we have of conflict, wherever we draw the line, right down to family violence, we are referring to situations in which there is a breakdown in relationships and a challenge to norms and to authorities. . . . [Conflict] is due to an assertion of individualism. It is a frustration based protest against lack of opportunities for development and against lack of recognition and identity. Whether the tension, conflict, or violence has origins in class, status, ethnicity, sex, religion, or nationalism, we are dealing with the same fundamental issues.

If the participants in the conflict can begin to recognise their conflict as a breakdown of relationships, and that there are fundamental similarities between the antagonists, then the process of abstraction will enhance their objectivity. The purpose of this process is to enable the participants to come to the understanding that *all the participants have legitimate needs that must be satisfied* in order to resolve the conflict. The other key here is to develop an analytical process to facilitate the changes required to create a political and social system in which these needs can be met. Burton further notes that:

Conflict resolution is, in the long term, a process of change in political, social, and economic systems. It is an analytical and problem solving process that takes into account such individual and group needs as identity and recognition, as well as institutional changes that are required to satisfy these needs.

Ethno-national conflict, such as in Northern Ireland, can be a form of protracted social conflict. Protracted social conflicts define intractable conflicts that are not readily amenable to resolution. Examples of identity groups in protracted social conflict are in the Middle East: the Palestinians, Israelis and Lebanese, in Cyprus: Greek and Turkish Cypriots, in Sri Lanka: Tamils and Sinhalese, in Spain: the Basques, and of course, in Northern Ireland: the Irish nationalists and Ulster unionists. Since these conflicts have not been resolved through 'normal' or track one diplomatic means, than an alternative approach should be used to resolve these conflicts. A full debate over the conflict resolution theory is at the present beyond the scope of this study however At present, a fusion of the Enemy System Theory and Human Needs Theory offer the most comprehensive and objective explanations of sectarianism. However, explanation is not enough. Burton's Conflict Resolution Theory provides a holistic approach to conflict resolution. As a relatively new and pioneering theoretical development, it remains outside the mainstream of the literature, it remains to be seen whether this approach will be accepted by the participants in the conflict, and used to their benefit to resolve it

The way forward?

Cross – Community engagement - One interesting aspect of the Good Friday agreement failing to attract much attention is the implied responsibility placed upon the voluntary sector to address the major structural problem of sectarianism and community division. It appears that at present some one hundred and thirty groups are actively engaged in 'pro -active' community relations and conflict resolution work, according to the Community Relations Council. All appear to be involved to some degree at community level with confronting the problems of sectarian conflict and the consequences of sectarianism. The figure also includes those promoting tolerance for local 'cultural' diversity. A number of groups based in the South have been included because they are engaged in cross-border work.

But there is some evidence emerging which suggests that not all of those (especially in the border areas) are seriously interested in cross-community work beyond an occasional and artificial contact. Some community workers are of the view that much more constructive work is carried out at other, less formal levels. (Robson ,2001) With such issues facing organisations can one realistically presume that the hope of tomorrows generations will be accomplished, if it is then bitter pills must be swallowed on all sides, and serious developments have to occur.

PROBLEMS WITH A COMMUNITY APPROACH

One community worker in the Creggan estate in Londonderry expressed some concern that the present approach to the reconciliation of the two communities is

inadequate because it is merely tinkering with the system. His view, expressed on a BBC Radio Foyle programme, was that attempts to bring young people together from each separate community through contact at some physically remote location is more likely to reinforce the stereotype image each has of the other when they return to their separate homes. What was needed, he felt, was a more structured approach which would bring local-governmental structures to bear on the problem.

In other words, an approach which would be properly resourced and which would look at the totality of problems associated with division and sectarianism, including education, territory, housing and 'community'. Indeed, one may suspect that it is the notion of 'community' as a unifying and healing concept which is at the core of the problem. Clearly this is a difficult path to tread. If 'community' is one of the problems, how would it be possible for 'community-based' organisations to contribute in any meaningful way to the search for a solution? Indeed, how does one define 'community' in any meaningful and constructive way? For some it represents an entire body of people based on religious/political affiliation, whilst for others it is defined by a radius of one hundred metres surrounding their home – indeed describing a sectarian island within an ocean composed of 'the others'.

Is there a basis for the resolution of the problems associated with a breakdown in community relations such as sectarianism and religious discrimination within what is described as the community 'movement'? There are two problems with this question.

The first is that the community 'movement' as it is presently constituted does not contain a sufficiently radical focus to draw itself away from its concentration with maintaining the status quo. A Londonderry-based community worker Eamon Deane recognised this tendency in 1981 when he commented 'paradoxically, those who would wish to radically change society are being used to maintain the most cherished and outmoded beliefs of the status quo' (Deane, 1981). Indeed, there is a substantial body of literature which points to the problems of the community sector breaking away from the tendency to support the dominant ideology (Dearlove, 1975; Lovett et al, 1994; Robson, 2000).

The second problem emerged out of the experience of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission. Lovett et al (1995) argued that the 'fear of a social movement with explicit aims and objectives and clear leadership' frightened protestant activists in such a way as to believe that such a lobby might form an association with the civil rights movement, thought of as a republican front. Yet another question constantly at the forefront of the community activist's mind was the danger of such a movement 'with clear leadership' and 'having clear social, economic and political objectives' losing its identity and running contrary to prevailing community development ideology with its strong emphasis on a nondirective approach to problem solving. Clarke reported in 1979 of the separate and quite different perspectives held by the two 'communities' regarding the role and aims of community development with regard to the need for social change and the central position of the state. The report suggested two extremes: one which acted in support of the state and the other using the community 'movement' to build a radical oppositional movement (Clarke, 1979).

In spite of the fact that much work has been directed in those areas in the North described as ‘Loyalist’ or ‘Protestant’, towards self sufficiency and community independence, there is still a residue of discomfort within those communities towards the creation of alternative forms of development, especially those which might be perceived as challenging the state. Some questions were raised in the seminar on Community Development in Protestant Areas (1991) which placed some of these issues in context: ‘is community development in Protestant areas retarded by conservatism, apathy, guilt, mistrust, fear of “reds-under-thebed”, of acknowledging poverty and unemployment, indeed, of living in the past?’ There continues to be reluctance within some community-based organisations in those areas to build sustainable bridges which will address some of the problems outlined in the Report.

There is little evidence to suggest that such conclusions on the potential of the community ‘movement’ as a basis for social and political change have changed or altered in the intervening period. Much of this emerges in the report on community development in protestant areas. But the picture is not an entirely negative one. Much work is being carried out within and between community-based groups to break down prejudice and challenge stereotypical images ‘of the other side’.

However, the question which must be asked is to what end and for what purpose. There are those who are quite sceptical about the basis on which such activity is being forged. It is widely assumed that once the next round of ‘Peace’ funding comes to an end many of those initiatives will disappear. It is generally recognised that attempts to bring children together in remote locations inevitably result in failure because they have to return to their own communities.

Whilst there are many who recognise the community as part of both the problem and the solution, there are those who argue that the problem is a structural one in which the role of the community is to act only as advocate for fundamental social and political change. That is the dilemma for the community activist in a society increasingly becoming fractured along sectional interests. ‘The end result was that the “movement” split into its many component parts, some concentrating on local issues, others establishing support and resources for community development within a particular ideological or sectarian standpoint’ (Lovett et al, 1995. p49)

Limitations of the study

In looking at the findings and conclusions of any research project, it is important to give due consideration to any limitations inherent in the design or conduct of the project at hand. In this study there were a number of limitations that must be taken into account:

1. Low response rate and consequent low number of participants;
2. The significant imbalance in the number and therefore proportion of Protestants and Catholics in the study;
3. The manner in which the questionnaire was administered, and arising from this, missing data and the over-use of the ‘Don’t Know’ response;
4. The low number of participants in conjunction with the aforementioned factors has meant that the cross tabulation of two or more variables has been impossible.

1. Low response rate and consequent low number of participants

The response rate of the study was 32%. This means that while the study was designed to include up to one hundred respondents, just 32 participated. Such a low number of respondents compromises the strength of any conclusions to be drawn from the study, and it must therefore be taken as an explorative rather than an analytical study.

2. The significant imbalance in the number and therefore proportion of Protestants and Catholics in the study

Of the 32 respondents who partook in the study, 20 were Catholic, 3 were Church of Ireland, 1 was Baptist, 1 was ‘Other’ and 7 people did not identify their religion, leading to 7 missing responses. This results, not only in a significant imbalance in the representation of the two main religions of the province, but also in cell counts so small as to prevent the ability to perform cross tabulations on the data based on religion.

3. The manner in which the questionnaire was administered, and arising from this, missing data and the over-use of the ‘Don’t Know’ response

The research design involved utilising the position of youth group leaders to disseminate and administer the questionnaire. The purpose of this design was to increase access to the population of interest. Unfortunately, the result of this system has been a significant amount of missing responses and an over-use of the ‘Don’t Know’ response category. This further lowers the responses gained from an already small number of participants caused by the low response rate discussed above, and further decreases the statistical strength of the data.

4. The low number of participants in conjunction with the aforementioned imbalance in religious representation has meant that the cross tabulation of two or more variables has been impossible

Low cell counts arose from the low response rate, missing variables and the use of the 'Don't Know' response category. The cell counts were so low that the cross tabulation of two or more variables was rendered impossible, and neither the research instrument or the data gained could be exploited to their full potential.