The Impact of Political Conflict on Children in Northern Ireland

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and Jennifer Hamilton

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The Impact of Political Conflict on Children in Northern Ireland: a report on the Community Conflict Impact on Children Study

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Institute for Conflict Research
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Table of contents

		Page
Preface		3
Acknowledgement		4
Glossary		5
1. Introduction and Background		9
1.1	Introduction	9
1.2	Background	10
2. Aims and Fieldwork Methods		12
2.1	Aims and objectives	12
2.2	Methods, logistics, target areas and interviews	12
2.3	Access: setting up interviews with children and young people	16
2.4	Analysis of data	17
3. Experience of Troubles		18
3.1	Analysis of data	18
3.2	Initial recollections of Troubles	20
3.3	Personal experience of Troubles	23
3.4	Parents experience	28
3.5	Peer group experience	30
3.6	School experience	32
3.7	Community experience & intra community violence	34
4. Impact of Troubles		39
4.1	Personal impact	39
4.2	School and educational impact	45
4.3	Impact on the family	47
4.4	Impact on peers and peer relationships	53
4.5	Impact on young people's communities	57
4.6	Impact on young people's political views	61

5. Consequences and Effects of Troubles 69
5.1 Aspirations for the future 69
5.2 Authority and policing & intergenerational relationships 73
5.3 Paramilitaries and young people 83

6. Conclusions 95
6.1 Methodological Issues 95
6.2 Findings 96

7. Recommendations 111

8. References 118

Preface

At the request of the Community Relations Council, the report has been edited in such a way that the voices of diverse young people are included. This inclusion is representative or indicative of the prevalence of certain experiences or problems within that group of young people. Therefore in reading the report, it is crucial to bear in mind the overall distribution of the effects of the Troubles in the population as a whole, and among children and young people in particular. The sources of quotations used in the report itself do not reflect this distribution. A full technical report is available on the ICR website www.conflictresearch.org.uk

Marie Smyth
February 2004

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Glossary

Amusements:	Funfair, fairground
Annoyed:	Upset, emotionally affected
Anti-social behaviour:	Petty crime, vandalism and neighbourhood nuisance
Bitter:	Bigoted against the other community
BRA:	Belfast Royal Academy; a mixed secondary school in North Belfast
CS gas, CS canister:	A gas used by the security forces in Northern Ireland for crowd control, often used in riot situations in the earlier part of the Troubles
Craic:	Fun (pronounced 'crack')
Dandered:	Sauntered
Eat the face off:	To verbally attack
Fenian:	Catholic (slang: derogatory)
Hoods:	Young people involved in persistent petty crime, in some areas organized in loosely formed gangs
Git:	Derogatory term about a person
Gough Barracks:	A security forces holding centre used for interrogation of suspects and located in Armagh
Huns:	Protestants (slang: derogatory)
Ignorant:	Ill-mannered
IRA:	Irish Republican Army, anti-British paramilitary group, whose political wing is Sinn Féin

Joy riding:	Stealing cars and driving them away, often at high speeds
July 12th:	Celebration of the victory of King William of Orange over the Catholic King James in 1690. Celebrated by the Orange Order and other Loyal Orders in Northern Ireland, Scotland and elsewhere
Long Kesh:	Prison camp, which was used during the period of internment without trial and which was subsequently renamed The Maze Prison, but Republicans refused to use the new name, and still refer to it as Long Kesh
Mate:	Friend
Murder:	Pandemonium, uproar, as in 'There was murder after I told her!'
Narking:	Needling, irritating
Newsletter:	Daily newspaper on Unionist side
Orangies:	Protestants, Loyalists (slang: derogatory)
Peelers:	Police
Peelers sitting at wee windows:	Policemen sitting at the lookout slits in security posts
Pigs:	Police (slang: derogatory)
Provo, Provie:	Member or supporter of the Provisional Irish Republican Army
PTA:	Prevention of Terrorism Act, legislation that allowed the security forces extensive powers of arrest and detention of anyone they were suspicious of
Quare:	Remarkable, marked
RA, Ra:	The IRA, Irish Republican Army

Red, white and blue:	Colours associated with Loyalism, colours of the British Union flag.
The Rising Sun:	A bar in Greysteel, County Derry Londonderry where the UFF conducted a raid on October 30, 1993, shooting seven customers (six Catholics and one Protestant) dead and injuring thirteen. The UFF said that it was an attack on the 'nationalist electorate' and claimed that it was in reprisal for the Shankill Road bomb seven days previously, which killed nine people immediately, one died later
RUC:	Royal Ulster Constabulary, the police force for Northern Ireland, renamed the Police Service of Northern Ireland as part of police reform introduced after the Good Friday Agreement
Shankill:	The largest Protestant/Loyalist area in North and West Belfast, regarded by some as the Loyalist 'heartland'
Slabber:	A person who talks too much and/or talks nonsense
Taig:	Catholic (slang: derogatory)
Tiger's Bay:	Loyalist area on an interface with New Lodge, a Catholic area in North Belfast
Tiocfaidh:	Pronounced 'chucky': term used to refer to Republicans, from their slogan 'Tiocfaidh ár lá' which means 'Our day will come.' Republicans are also sometimes referred to as 'chuckies'
Torture:	To pester
Training school:	A residential custodial facility for persistent school absentees and young offenders
UDR:	Ulster Defence Regiment, local regiment of the British Army, now reformed as the Royal Irish Regiment

UVF:	Ulster Volunteer Force, loyalist paramilitary group, whose political wing is the Progressive Unionist Party
UYM:	Ulster Young Militants
Waterworks:	Public park on an interface in North Belfast
We'uns, wains:	Young children

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Since the World Summit for Children in 1990, the United Nations has increasingly sought to draw international attention to the plight of children throughout the world that are affected by armed conflict. On 20 December 1993, following a recommendation by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the General Assembly recommended that the Secretary General appoint an independent expert to study the impact of armed conflict on children. The Secretary General appointed Mr Olara Otunnu as his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in September 1997. The appointment had been predated in November 1996 by the presentation of a report to the United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly of an international study, headed by Graca' Machel, which examined the impact of armed conflict on children internationally.

In Northern Ireland, there had been a long-standing concern about the impact that the prolonged violent conflict – referred to locally as the 'Troubles' - in the region had had on the children and young people who lived with violence and disruption. By the late 1990s, concern was being expressed about the lack of support provided to those bereaved or injured in the conflict. As the peace process of the 1990s unfolded, it began to be clear that the process of peace-building would have to build in ways of addressing the needs of those who had been most affected by the violence of the past.

Research by the Cost of the Troubles Study (COTTS, 1996) systematically documented the human impact of the conflict on communities in Northern Ireland. The impact was found to be disproportionately borne by young people: those aged 24 and under accounted for around 40 percent of the total number of deaths during the Troubles (Fay et al., 1999). The situation of young people living in areas worst affected by the conflict was most acute. Section 12 of the Good Friday Agreement, signed in April 1998, recognised the special position of those bereaved or injured in the Troubles, noting their right to remember and to contribute to a changed society. The Agreement made special mention of young people affected by the Troubles, and called on the new dispensation to develop special community-based initiatives for this group affected by the Troubles, based on 'best international practice.'

1.2 Background to the Project

The Community Conflict Impact on Children (CCIC) project was established in 1999, bringing together a group of people from both of the main traditions in Northern Ireland, some of whom had been bereaved as children in the Troubles and some of whom worked with children and young people and various children's charities. CCIC developed from the Cost of the Troubles Study in order to address the issue of children and young people's experience of the Troubles. The organisation aimed to collect evidence on the effects of the Troubles on children and young people throughout Northern Ireland from urban and rural areas, and from both sides of the sectarian divide background.

As part of the work of the project, a separate survey of young people was undertaken in collaboration with a young people's organisation, The Joint Society for a Common Cause. This led to a separate publication (see Smyth, and Scott, (2000), *The YouthQuest 2000 Survey*, (Belfast, CCIC). A short film was also made with Ulster Television, arising out of some photographic work done by young people who documented their lives in black and white photographs.

Following the development of this research, Mr Otunnu, the United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, accepted the invitation of CCIC and Save the Children Fund to visit Northern Ireland in order to speak at a conference, and to examine the situation of children affected by the Troubles. The visit took place on 26th to 28th June 2000, with over 100 young people from Northern Ireland and overseas participating. Mr Otunnu was the keynote speaker at the Belfast Conference, and presented his report on the situation of children and young people in Northern Ireland to the Security Council of the United Nations in November 2000.

The Special Representative made a series of recommendations, contained in his report to the General Assembly, as a result of his visit, namely:

> *a. Sustained and concerted attention to children is needed throughout the consolidation of peace.*
>
> *b. A new body is needed to consolidate the focus on children's rights in Northern Ireland.*
>
> *c. Remove children from paramilitary activity and address issues of community security.*
>
> *d. Support the capacity of families and teachers to protect children.*
>
> *e. Bring lessons learned elsewhere to bear on behalf of children in Northern Ireland.*
>
> *f. Ensure youth participation in the consolidation of peace in Northern Ireland.*
>
> United Nations General Assembly Fifty-fifth session: Agenda item 110: Promotion and protection of children's rights. 3 October 2000: pp 13-15.

During the course of the study, and as part of the commitment to participative action research approaches, the project team contributed to a growing local interest in and focus on the effects of the Troubles on Northern Ireland's children.

2. Aims and Fieldwork Methods

2.1. Aims and objectives

The project aimed to establish the nature and levels of need among children and young people affected by the Troubles, the first phase of work concentrated in regions that had been worst affected. The key objectives of the research were to:

1. establish information about the nature and levels of need among children and young people affected by the Troubles in areas of high, medium and low violence;
2. empower participants (children, young people, community organisations and voluntary organisations) to better identify and address the effects of the Troubles on children and young people;
3. initiate dialogue and discussion about the impact of the Troubles on children and young people at community, institutional and societal levels. To achieve these comparisons experiences from other societies, addressing similar issues, were drawn upon;
4. further the development of training materials for professionals as well as contributing to educational and play materials for children and young people drawing upon the results of the study; generate policy and practice recommendations for use in other projects and institutions.

The extent to which the project has met these objectives will be discussed in the conclusions.

2.2 Methods: logistics, target areas and interviews

Vetting of interviewers

Researchers were vetted by the police to ensure that they had no criminal records or other matters outstanding that would render them unsuitable to work with children. This is a required procedure for all workers in direct contact with children. The senior researcher was also a qualified family therapist and had professional experience of communicating with children on sensitive and emotive issues.

Target areas

The Cost of the Troubles Study had documented the uneven geographical distribution of the effects of the Troubles in particular the distribution of fatal incidents in the Troubles which were concentrated

within a relatively small geographical area – North and West Belfast, Derry Londonderry, the border regions and the Craigavon – Portadown area. The researchers hypothesised that the effects of the Troubles were disproportionately felt by certain groups of young people, such as those who had fallen through the net of the education system or those who had fallen foul of the law. Therefore recruitment procedures ensured the inclusion of interviewees from these particular populations.

The interviews

A series of in-depth focus groups and individual interviews were carried out throughout Northern Ireland in which young people were specifically asked to talk about how the Troubles had affected them. These included:

1. interviews with adults about their childhood experiences of the Troubles;
2. interviews with children and young people about their experiences of the Troubles;
3. interviews with adults working with children.

A total of 98 people were interviewed, 11 of whom had been previously interviewed as part of The Cost of the Troubles Study. These 11 interviews included nine adults aged over 20 who recalled their experiences as children and two young adults aged under 20 who described their present and past experiences of the Troubles. Two main questions were posed , namely 'What is your experience of the Troubles?' and 'How do you think the Troubles have affected you?' Interviewees were asked to answer these questions using a time-line, representing their experiences from birth to the date of interview. Interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and coded initially within Nud*ist for use in the COTTS study. The sub-set of nine interviews with informants who spoke extensively about their childhood experience were subsequently re-coded for use in the current study. The remaining 87 participants were children or young people who took part in either individual interviews or focus group discussions. (Table 1)

Interview size

The young people were aged between 12 and 20. Some of the young people were interviewed in small groups of between two and six people. This approach was favoured over individual interviews, in order to encourage the young people to participate and talk about their experiences. However, some participants (N=7) requested to be interviewed on their own. Where interviewees requested individual

interviews, this was facilitated. The reasons given for preferring individual interviews varied; for example one young person wished to be interviewed separately because of anticipated differences in views and past experiences between them and another member of their family.

Table 1:

Number of people in Interview Group	Number of groups	Number of interviewees
1	7	7
2[1]	6	12
3	3	9
4	2	8
5	3	15
6	2	12
7	2	14
8	1	8
Total	26	85

Table 2 shows a breakdown of these interviews by location, excluding the 11 conducted as part of the Cost of the Troubles Study. In total 12 interviews (including focus groups) took place in Belfast, two of these conducted in a training school with young people who were not from the Belfast area.

Three interviews were conducted in County Derry Londonderry two of which were conducted in Greysteel, where a number of killings took place in 1993. Other areas such as Strabane, Enniskillen and Portadown were also targeted for interviews, in order to reflect the geographical concentration of Troubles-related incidents in such locations.

[1] *One interview conducted with two people from the 18-20 age group was not included in Table 1 as they were interviewed in their capacity as youth workers, and were not referring to their own experiences as young people, thus the totals for Table 1 are 85 not 87.*

Table 2: Location, religious affiliation and age of interviewees

Location	No of interviews	No of interviewees	Religious Affiliation			Age	
			Catholic	Protestant	Other	12-17	18-20
Belfast*	12	46	28	18		44	2
Southern Border towns	2	9	9			9	
Coleraine area	4	8	1	6	1	8	
County Derry Londonderry (rural and urban)	3	10	10			8	2
Enniskillen	1	3		3		3	
Portadown	2	2	2			1	1
Lurgan	1	2		2		2	
Banbridge	1	1	1			1	
Strabane	1	6	6			6	
Total	27	87	57	29	1	82	5

*(Includes two interviewees from training schools)

Interview procedures

Interviewers explained the purpose of the research and outlined the area of inquiry. The interviewer asked questions along two main themes. The questions prompted interviewees to talk about their educational lives, their relationships within their own community and with the other community, attitudes and values in relation to the Troubles, the prospect of peace and their aspirations for the future. All interviews were tape-recorded, and these tapes were transcribed for analysis. All transcripts were returned to participants for their information, and to ensure that they were suitably anonymised.

2.3 Access: setting up interviews with children and young people

Preliminary contacts

Contacts were made with a number of organisations, both voluntary and statutory, that worked directly with young people in communities or with populations affected by the Troubles. Adults were in the role of gate-keepers, affording or denying access to potential participants. In a substantial number of cases, letters and phone calls asking for co-operation met with no response from the adult workers, and in most cases, several follow-up phone calls were necessary before a conversation about access could take place.

Researchers met directly with the young people, explained the nature and purpose of the study, and answered their questions about the research and procedures. In only one case was permission refused directly by the young people after having met the researchers.

The issue of access and making preliminary contacts posed some difficulties for the research team, and the level of difficulty was considerably higher than experienced in any other project. In some instances there appeared to be a territorial attitude on the part of some of the adults in the organisations we contacted, and it sometimes seemed that the barriers to accessing the views and experiences of children and young people were protective of the adults' rather than the children's interests. However, in the end, we managed to form good working relationships with a range of community based organisations throughout Northern Ireland, who facilitated the work of the research team.

Consent

In all cases where interviewees were under the age of 18, written parental consent or consent of the legal guardian was obtained. Parents and guardians were given written information about the project and its purpose, and provided with contact details for the researchers for further information. The participants over the age of eighteen also were required to give written consent. In all cases involving those under the age of eighteen, anonymity was a condition of the interview. One interviewee who had reached the age of eighteen after the interview subsequently wished to have her name used, and one interviewee felt that he also wished to be named, for personal reasons.

2.4 Analysis of deaths data

An analysis of deaths in the Troubles of children and young people affords an overview of the patterns of damage done to children and young people in Northern Ireland. Using the Cost of the Troubles Study database of deaths, which was updated for the purpose, an analysis of deaths under the age of 18 and death of those 21 years old and under was undertaken. Elsewhere (see Fay, Morrissey and Smyth 1999) it has been argued that death rates and the distribution of deaths is a good surrogate for other effects of the Troubles such as injury. Examination of the pattern of deaths amongst children and young people, therefore, can give a useful overview and indicator of the concentrations of the effects of the Troubles on certain sub-groups of children and young people.

3. Experiences of the Troubles

In this section, a more detailed examination of the deaths data and content of the interview data is presented, organised under a series of themes. In the first section, what children and young people said about their experience of the Troubles will be presented. Subsequent sections examine what they said about the impact of the Troubles on them.

Children and young people's experience of the Troubles is examined under a number of headings, beginning with their initial recollections, the experiences of the young people themselves, their parents and family, and peers. Later, their experiences in community and school settings are also presented.

3.1 Analysis of deaths data

The effects of the Troubles have not been uniform, but have been concentrated in particular patterns, some of which are particularly marked in deaths of children and young people. Deaths of children under the age of 11 do not show a consistent pattern, but from the age of 12 upwards, the number of deaths rises steadily, peaking at age 19, which has the largest death toll of any age. If deaths are disaggregated by gender, however (Table 3) this pattern is clearly attributable to the deaths of males, whereas female deaths do not conform to this trend. Male deaths account for over three quarters of all deaths under the age of 18, a lower proportion than for all deaths, where males account for just over 91% of all deaths.

Table 3: Deaths under 18 by gender (1969-2003)

AGE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
0-1	4	10	14
2	2	1	3
3	4	0	4
4	1	3	4
5	1	1	2
6	2	2	4
7	1	1	2
8	2	2	4
9	5	3	8
10	5	1	6
11	4	0	4
12	8	4	12
13	10	5	15

14	11	7	18
15	26	5	31
16	47	4	51
17	77	15	92
Total	210 (77%)	64 (23%)	274 (100%)

An analysis of deaths by religion is shown in Table 4. Almost three quarters of children under the age of 18 killed in the Troubles have been Catholic, a fifth were Protestant, and the remaining 6% were from outside Northern Ireland.

Table 4: Deaths due to the Troubles under age 18 by religion (1969-2003)

AGE	CATH	PROT	UNKNOWN	NNI	TOTAL
0-1	10	3	0	1	14
2	1	1	0	1	3
3	3	0	0	1	4
4	4	0	0	0	4
5	1	0	0	1	2
6	3	1	0	0	4
7	1	1	0	0	2
8	3	0	0	1	4
9	7	1	0	0	8
10	5	1	0	0	6
11	3	1	0	0	4
12	7	1	0	4	12
13	12	3	0	0	15
14	16	2	0	0	18
15	23	7	0	1	31
16	44	7	0	0	51
17	59	27	0	6	92
All ages 0-17	202	56	0	16	274
	74%	20%		6%	100%

The differences between the numbers of Catholic and Protestant deaths in the older young people is shown in Table 5. Catholic young people account for between 39% to 48% of deaths in each age category from ages 18 to 21. Protestants account for between 12 to 19% in the same ages. Deaths of those from outside Northern Ireland, substantial numbers of whom were British soldiers, account for between 29% to 40% of deaths of 18-21 year olds.

Table 5: Deaths due to the Troubles age 18 – 21 (1969-2003)

AGE	CATH	% C	PROT	% P	UNKWN	% UKN	NNI	% NNI	TOT
18	53	39	26	19	3	2	54	40	136
19	81	48	34	20	6	4	49	29	170
20	74	44	21	12	12	7	63	37	170
21	69	45	26	17	4	3	54	35	153

Almost three times as many Catholics as Protestants killed were under age 21, with 479 (53%) deaths being of Catholics, 163 (18%) being of Protestants, and 236 (26%) being of those from outside Northern Ireland.

The largest responsibility for deaths lies with Republican paramilitaries, who killed 468 (52%) of the total of 903 children and young people aged 21 and under killed, but a smaller share (38% or 103 deaths) of those under the age of 18. Loyalists are responsible for 209 (23%) of those aged 21 and under, but a larger share (29% or 78 deaths) of those under 18. The security forces killed 169 (19%) aged 21 and under, 139 (15%) of which were due to the British Army. The security forces were responsible for a larger share of deaths (25%) of those under 18, where the 67 children killed account for almost a quarter of all deaths under 18.

Finally, the deaths of children and young people, like the other effects of the Troubles, are not evenly spread geographically. Almost half (48%) of all deaths of those 21 and under took place in Belfast, with concentrations in North and West Belfast in particular. A further 9% of deaths under the age of 21 took place in Derry Londonderry, and other concentrations in the border counties, with, for example, 3% of all deaths of those aged 21 and under taking place in Crossmaglen.

The analysis of the interviews presented here should be read with these patterns in mind.

3.2 Initial Recollections

Interviewees were asked to describe their first memory of the Troubles. There were notable variations in responses between genders and social classes. However, variations between different locations were the most marked, with respondents from areas that had experienced higher levels of Troubles-related violence giving accounts of very direct encounters with the Troubles, whereas children and young people from locations with lower levels of violence recounted second-hand experiences. Children in these latter locations had, for example, first become aware of the conflict through media reporting of particular events, and others had

learned through stories or songs they had heard from their older peers and family members. One female from an outlying Protestant estate in North Belfast described how she first became aware of the Troubles:

It's just always on the news, and you heard about all the Trouble, the rioting, and all the police and all, and fightin' and everything. And your mummy and daddy saying, 'Isn't that terrible?' and all. And people and all coming on the T.V. all emotional and all and saying about how it's affecting them and all and how they were afraid in their homes. And stuff like that. (Protestant Female, Sunnningdale)

A female Catholic interviewee from a rural town in the North West said that she had first encountered the Troubles through:

My uncle telling me 'Tiocfaidh' songs when I was about six. (Catholic Female, Strabane)

In other accounts, flags, murals, painted kerb stones, or public rituals such as the 12th July celebrations had been their first encounter with the divided nature of their society. For others, inter-communal violence and a high security presence in their communities formed their first memories of the Troubles. Some described having had a general awareness of a high security presence, whilst a number described particular incidents where the behaviour of members of the security forces had seemed threatening.

Some first memories were of witnessing or hearing about violent incidents such as riots, shootings, bombings and other sectarian attacks. In some cases, children had been directly exposed to the aftermath of political violence, while in others, they had heard stories about it from family and friends:

I was about 12 or 13 actually when I first experienced the sight of an explosion or the sound of a explosion … this would have been on our estate here where we all lived. And very vivid memories of different things on that day. You know, the army, presence of the army, presence of the police, and watching them and seeing them crying and wondering what the hell was going on type of thing… what I think the most vivid thing that I recollect was sort of running down after the bomb went off and seeing different parts of people's bodies, but not realising that they were people's bodies (Protestant Female, Shankill)

The Rising Sun shooting, I live just about a hundred yards from there and that was my first main experience (Catholic Male, Greysteel)

A number of interviewees described being the victims of attacks. In one case, the family car had been attacked whilst being driven by the child's father, who was in the police service:

One of my earliest memories that there was trouble would be, just down at the other end of the town as they call it, just past central point, there's a roundabout and that roundabout, that whole area is a very, very bad area for police and UDR and all that in general. And one day Dad was driving round that roundabout and there was stones fired at our car. And then he was stopped at some traffic lights or something and someone broke the window and tried to lift me out of my car seat, (Protestant Female, Lurgan)

Other interviewees described attacks on the family home as the way they first became aware of the conflict happening around them:

My first memory of the Troubles was when I got a petrol bomb put through my window…[I was] nine. It was into my mummy's room, and there was all my wee brothers and that. And we were all in the house and our house was on fire. And we all had to get out of the house. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

Many of the young people interviewed had known someone who had been killed in the Troubles and in some cases, this was their first memory of the Troubles:

My first memory was when my Aunt got shot…[I was] eleven. It frightened me, so it did. …she was only walking around the corner to go to me aunt's house. She got shot dead….I.R.A. cross-fire. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

In some interviews, children and young people described feelings of fear and confusion on hearing about or directly experiencing violence and intimidation. In other accounts, however, a sense of acceptance of violence, and of considering it normal came across, where the young people have had no experience of life before the conflict. In some accounts, violence was conveyed as exciting and a source of entertainment:

People would have been involved in rioting. Now I'm not going to, by no means am I going to say I was a great rioter, but you would have been there if stones had been thrown. It was all looked upon as good crack, you know. But no way, if I'd seen a land-rover coming I was away like a hare. (Catholic Male, Lurgan)

Most of the wee lads in the area, as soon as they hear, like, that there's burnin' and all, they just want to be in on it, and all. (Protestant Male, North Belfast)

Interviewees were asked when they had first become aware of differences between Catholics and Protestants. Many said that they had been aware from a very young age, as young as five or six, while others had only begun to notice at secondary school. School was frequently cited as the location of this discovery. The impact of this on the development of young people's attitudes to the other community varied extensively, and seemed to depend on factors such as parents' attitudes, contact with members of the other community, and the nature of the experience which had first highlighted divisions. For example, while some people had first noticed differences in cultural practices, others had been victims of physical or verbal sectarian attacks:

I remember a girl who went to a Catholic school asking me if I was a Catholic or a Protestant and, I didn't know what to say and I remember going home and asking my parents and they said well you're a Protestant but it doesn't really matter (Protestant Female, Enniskillen)

I think my first experience was on a school bus in primary school. The Catholic primary school and the Protestant primary school got on the same bus and we used to, like, fight. But, we didn't know nothing about politics, like or anything. But one day…, one of the young fellas called us Fenian bastards, like… (Catholic Female, Lurgan)

From their accounts of their first memories of the Troubles, it is clear that the children and young people we interviewed became sensitised to violence and division from an early age.

3.3 Personal Experience of the Troubles

Children and young people's exposure to political violence in Northern Ireland has, however, often been much more direct and personal. Among the young people we interviewed, many had been exposed to violence and sectarianism for a sustained period of time and some talked about having witnessed bomb explosions or shootings in their area. For some, this kind of violence had become part of everyday life:

…I remember when the bomb went off and we all crawled under the tables. We didn't know what was going on. And, like, the teacher, she started telling us it was just a crane falling. And, like, practically everybody was on the floor crying. (Catholic Female, Keady)

I was young but I can still remember this sudden blast and then, I thought it was just like a car door closing and windows smashing (Protestant Male, Enniskillen)

One of the interviewees had been shocked by the triumphalist attitude of some perpetrators and their supporters:

I remember another time, you know when I was about fourteen, fifteen, we were just walking down to a friend's house and next thing, we heard a bomb, right?…the fellas we could see them from the front, they waved out and everything as if, you know like, here's one up for us kinda thing.(Catholic Female, Keady)

Some young people described living in close proximity to the perpetrators of attacks on them or their family, adding to the climate of fear and mistrust.

Twenty-five interviewees reported having known someone who had been killed in the Troubles. In some cases, these were more distant relatives or neighbours but for some they were members of their immediate family:

There was things happening all the time, but what really brought it home to me was the day my brother was killed …He was working, and he worked to one o'clock that day, and he came home. And his two friends called for him. And my mummy says, 'Stay and have a cup of tea before you go out.' They were going to go to town to buy new jeans or something. And he said, ' No mummy, we'll be back in a minute.' And he went out and he never came back. Two o'clock there was an explosion and he was killed and his two mates were killed. (Catholic Female, Newtownabbey)

The accounts young people gave of the killing of civilians conveyed their sense of danger, insecurity and injustice. One young person interviewed described seeing her youth leader shot, and realising that innocent civilians on the other side also got killed:

I remember one time I was sitting in my house… We looked out the window, and we saw some man getting shot. He was a different religion from what we were, and it was our religion that shot him. I was really scared. …he was our youth leader…everybody couldn't believe it, that something like that could happen. Cause, like, whenever you hear about, you know, Protestants getting shot, you think, 'Auch, well, sure, they must've been, you know, in the U.V.F. and all.' You know, whenever you're younger… And then, see once he got shot? Then we just realised that it wasn't a matter of what he was in. It was just a matter that he was a different religion, you know. And it just scared everybody, you know…I was about eleven. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

In certain communities, such as those in North Belfast, the level of violence in the community meant that some young people had repeated experiences of witnessing killings. One of the most shocking accounts was given by a young Catholic Female from Ardoyne:

I was with my aunt whenever she was killed. We'd just walked round the corner and there was a whole lot of shots fired, the army, and my aunt was shot… And then over in my house two years ago …the UVF came into my house and killed my cousin …I was there with my wee brothers and my mummy. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

Interviewees had not only witnessed attacks but sometimes had also been victims of them. A number of interviewees had known young people who had been injured or killed in attacks, some of them as young as fifteen. One interviewee, interviewed as an adult as part of the Cost of the Troubles Study, described how she had been badly injured in a shooting incident when she was seventeen years old. Her friend was fatally wounded in the same attack:

…we were half asleep in the back seat … a car pulled up in front of us and there were men getting out with guns. …I was 17, Margaret had just turned 18, young Donaghy was 16, and the two lads that jumped out and ran, they were 18….There were only two doors in the car and we were trapped. …So I lay down and …my mind was that I'm too young to die….The boy at the end tried to get out. …they shot him as he was getting out of the car. The other two got away, thank God. That just left Margaret and I in the car. So they riddled the car with a sub machine gun…it seemed like an eternity…and then I felt pain, like a burning sensation and I remember as each bullet hit me it lifted me off the seat…. At one stage, my head hit the ceiling of the car. …I was hit in my arm, two in my hip, one in my thigh. One in my leg, foot and ankle. One in my hand. Eight times altogether… Margaret lived for a week. She died a week later in hospital. (Catholic Female, Newtownabbey)

This attack had taken place as the interviewee was on her way to work in North Belfast. Some other interviewees described attacks on themselves and family members in their homes. Such attacks had the effect of transforming their homes from havens of safety and security to an insecure site of potential political violence:

…One night about three years ago, I was sitting in the conservatory. And I heard a knock at the back gate and I thought it was just the wind because it was quite a windy night. But then I heard it again, and it was like really loud, like someone was thumping the back gate. And then I saw this hand come up

over the back gate, and I just - I didn't know what to do! I came out here to tell Mum, and I heard someone shouting - I heard a man shouting and I heard someone fighting. And I just froze. And then I ran back into the conservatory. And then the next thing you know, Mum is standing at the top of the living room with blood all over her. Some man had slashed her wrist. He had slashed her neck, broken her wrist and slashed her leg…. I would have been I think eleven. (Protestant Female, Lurgan)

There was a wide variation in the personal experiences described by interviewees depending on the area in which the young person lived, and the level of segregation. Some young people interviewed lived in communities that were overwhelmingly Catholic or Protestant in composition, whilst others lived in mixed areas. It was those interviewees who lived on interfaces between 'single identity' communities who described the most intense exposure to inter-communal violence.

A number of interviewees described differences in the experience and attitude of males and females. Boys were considered more likely to be targets of sectarian violence:

I've never had to take a lot of abuse from people with being a Protestant. But I think it's different for boys in many ways because you know, I have heard of boys getting more physical abuse, really, from people. (Protestant Female, Enniskillen)

…we can go into the amusements without anybody saying anything to us. But then, if they [the boys] did, they'd get their head kicked in… (Catholic Female, Keady)

Some female interviewees acknowledged that females did engage in sectarian abuse, but that it was a different kind of abuse to that engaged in by boys:

I think boys would even get more verbal abuse but if there was someone, like another girl who was bigoted they might be more subtle in their, you know it's their abuse of you, (Protestant Female, Enniskillen)

A great deal of time in interviews was taken up with describing experiences of and attitudes to both paramilitaries and security forces. However, the extent and nature of experiences of both security forces and paramilitaries varied according to gender, religion, location, and social class. Reports of harassment and confrontations with the security forces were most common, though not exclusive to young people from

nationalist areas. House raids were also a recurring feature of interviews with young people from nationalist areas.

Two interviews were with children of police officers, the first with two young Protestant females, and the second with one young Catholic male. Due to the overwhelmingly Protestant composition of the police, and its fraught relationship with the Nationalist and Catholic communities, these two interviews described rather different experiences. While both families had experienced some form of intimidation as a result of their parent's job, one had suffered higher levels of violence, perhaps due to the different locations of their homes:

Well, basically, my Dad is in the police and because of that we suffered intimidation, we had people writing messages up on our back gate, things like 'watch your windows' and 'pigs burn with fire', 'RUC pigs out', things like that then …we got wreaths sent to our house sympathising on our deaths, we got sympathy cards, we got bunches of flowers, we had a letter bomb. (Protestant Female, Lurgan)

In both cases, the need to conceal the parent's occupation led to limited interaction with peers and feelings of isolation. These young people described in interview how they had become conscious of security from an early age, particularly in matters of security around the family home:

It was always, 'Ask who's at the door before you open it.' (Protestant Female, Lurgan)

Every time you went out the door you had to look under the car and check around the wheels and stuff. Then my dad would go across it with the wee bits and pieces, then we could get in the car. It was quite a worrying thing. (Catholic Male, Banbridge)

Yet, in some of the interviews, although the Troubles created anxieties for most of the young people, it was an obvious source of excitement at times:

There was a bomb scare … just out there in the big bins beside the Alpha. We were coming back from Hazelbank and there was a patrol about a hundred - about ten land rovers came up to one of those big bomb van things! Wee robot and all out! It was class, so it was. (Protestant Male, Rathcoole)

A number of young people admitted either having seen or willingly taken part in inter-communal riots and confrontations with the security

forces 'just for the craic'. While none of the interviewees actually admitted to joining a paramilitary organisation, a number had been involved in more sporadic street violence. Clashes with the security forces were more common in, though not exclusive to, Nationalist areas.

Many young people, from both Nationalist and Unionist communities, described being aware of a paramilitary presence in their community. In areas that have experienced higher levels of conflict-related violence, direct contact with paramilitaries was more frequently reported. While some young people interviewed expressed admiration for paramilitaries from their own community, or said that they felt that paramilitaries were necessary for the protection of the community, young people also criticised them for the brutality of their punishment attacks and for their harassment of children and young people. Some young people interviewed were opposed to the paramilitaries' use of violence as a whole.

Overall, the young people we interviewed had a substantial and varied exposure to the violence of the Troubles, which was differentiated by gender, location, and by the occupation of their parents. Whilst they reported being scared and intimidated by violence, it was also a source of excitement and 'craic' for some young people.

3.4 Parents' experience of the Troubles

One feature of the young people's accounts of learning about the Troubles was their description of what they learned of their parents' experience of the Troubles. Although the focus of the interviews was on the experiences of children and young people, many young people described how their parents had talked about the Troubles and told stories of their experiences to their children. For many children their parents were central in introducing them to the Troubles, and providing them with an interpretation of the Troubles at an early stage in their lives. Parents socialise children into a certain understanding of the conflict and of their place in it by telling children about their own experiences. They also provide their children with a broader narrative of their community's experience. By telling children about their own past experiences and those of their community, parents ensure that their experiences are woven into the narratives available to the next generation:

My Dad told me about Bloody Sunday and the enquiry. And he told me about that there, then that was it! It was just, like, I became more interested in politics from then. I started watching the news more and just kept an eye on how things were going. (Catholic Male, Belfast)

In this context of continuing political violence, parents were faced with the challenge of trying to keep children and young people safe. In addition, the family home and the family itself were often the target of sectarian attack, transforming them from places of security to that of political violence. In some cases, remaining indoors was not enough to ensure the safety of family members.

In some cases, families were caught in cross-fire, whereas in others, families were attacked because of the religious background of the family. In other instances attacks were due to the association of a family member with a particular group or organisation, such as the paramilitaries, police or army. For the three children who had a parent in the police force, security checks around the home had become part of their daily routine. Two interviewees from the same family with a policeman father had been taught by their parents not to answer the door, while all had learned not to disclose their father's occupation to people outside the close circle of family and friends. Attacks on the home had led a number of families to move to a safer area.

House raids by the security forces were described by a number of Catholic interviewees. In some cases, the raid had followed the involvement of a family member in violence, but often this was not the case, and it was perceived to be harassment, carried out without valid reason and with little respect for their home.

One interviewee described how she felt that their whole family had been stigmatised following the death of her brother who died in a bomb explosion alongside some alleged members of the IRA. She felt intimidated on returning to work in a local mixed factory:

They stopped me and said, 'We're going to do you!' and all this here. And they sort of branded the family 'Provo bastards' or you know 'scum of the earth' and all this. Well I was really frightened because I was a very, very quiet person and they had all sorts of Union Jacks wrapped round their machines and they'd have given you dirty looks and treated you like dirt. (Catholic Female, Newtownabbey)

Much of these difficulties were taken for granted by the interviewees, and regarded as commonplace and unremarkable. They were simply part of life in a conflicted and segregated society, and part of growing up was learning how to negotiate a path between the various difficulties, dangers and obstacles.

3.5 Peer group experience of the Troubles

The impact of the Troubles on young people's relationships with their school-friends and other children in their community was evident in many of the interviews. These effects were manifest in two main ways. First, the segregated nature of society in Northern Ireland makes it difficult for many young people to form relationships with people from the other community. Comprehensive segregation in schooling, housing, religious practice, sport and social life ensures that contact between Protestant and Catholic young people is limited. The minority of young people who attend integrated schools or live in mixed areas have a different experience. Even for these young people, mixing with peers from the other community was not always easy.

Second, the nature of young people's relationship with other young people from their own 'side' is also affected by the Troubles, which shapes young people's lives and their relationships in a number of ways. For example, some young people reported having been put under pressure by their peers to engage in sectarian activities or to harbour sectarian sentiments.

Interviewees gave examples of peer group socialisation, and how their peer group attempted to influence their behaviour and keep them in line with the broader community's 'way of doing things':

I've gone with Catholic girls and all and my friends, Protestants, kept on saying, 'Why are you going with that Taigy git for?' and all. And I said 'I'm the one that's going with her, you're not!' And they kept on saying, 'Well guess what? You've just got no friends!' And I said, 'Friends will always stick by you whatever you do!' And he said, 'Well, we're not your friends!' And I said, 'You were never my friend anyway, you were just a slabber!' and all. (Protestant Male, Coleraine)

Interviewees who had attempted to resist such pressures reported coming under verbal or physical attack:

I've got Catholic friends, girls and all, and boys and all and they're just like - I say do you fancy coming up and sleep over and all and camp out? And I camped out one night and we got bricks thrown at the tent. (Protestant Male, Coleraine)

Several interviewees said that the only contact they had with members of the other community had taken place outside their community and daily lives, such as on holiday:

I went on holidays and all with ones from England and wee boys from the Shankill and Newtownards and Derry and everywhere, and I still keep in contact with them and meet them in the town. And it's not as if I'm told that I'm not allowed near them. It's just if they start being bigoted and all, I start watching myself. But they are nice, you know what I mean? It's not as if they're threatening me or anything. (Catholic Male, Ardoyne)

Other interviewees reported difficulty in maintaining relationships across the sectarian divide that they had formed on such occasions. According to one young Protestant female from Lurgan, the border was the only place she felt safe meeting her Catholic friend. A number of interviewees had made friends when taking part in cross-community schemes. Some interviewees had found this to be a positive experience:

…the Ulster Project…is like a thing for children in Northern Ireland. I was on it last summer… it really did have a big impact on me … you get to spend a month with people from different churches and stuff, it has a greater effect on you than you know, one or two meetings or spending the day with them does. (Protestant Female, Enniskillen)

Other interviewees complained that, in reality, little mixing had taken place, even at cross-community events:

…it wasn't the fact that we were really hard or bitter feelings against the other pupils. …You can meet one or two Protestants but I'm even finding with those schemes, you didn't really mix. (Catholic Female, Keady)

Interviewees described how hard it was to maintain contact on returning home, because of the change in behaviour among young people when they are back in their own community context. These behaviour changes were attributed to the effects of peer and community pressure and the perceived danger of crossing interfaces:

…when you're actually there with them they're actually all right. But when they're round everybody else in their area they act tough in front of everybody else - and I can admit we do it too- but that's the way it is. (Catholic Female, New Lodge)

Q: Were you able to keep friends with people?

Yeah, sometimes.

Q: After you came back?

No because you didn't really get to meet them ones again because like they were away up the motorway where you come out of Fortwilliam, something like that, up past Tiger's Bay. (Catholic Male, New Lodge)

Another factor that seemed to discourage Catholic and Protestant young people from mixing was the perceived danger presented by the other group. Such fears were often reinforced by the attitudes of parents and the experiences of peers.

Other young people described experiences of being attacked, which confirms the real risks of mixing:

My brother was down in Waterworks before, just after Christmas, a couple of years ago, and they were all, his mates and all, they all went down to stand in Waterworks because they wouldn't want to stand on the corner. And all the Orangies came down and started beating him with them bars. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

Even when peaceful encounters occurred, young people were careful, even wary, about what they said, and what they wore. In mixed company, contentious issues were frequently avoided and symbols strongly identified with one community avoided.

3.6 School Experience of the Troubles

Interviewees also described their experiences within the school environment, and aspects of their relationships with teachers and other pupils. For a substantial number of children, their first conscious exposure to sectarianism or issues related to the Troubles such as discrimination had taken place within the school environment. Only a minority of interviewees attended integrated schools, and most went to schools that were not religiously mixed, and this reflected the overall situation in Northern Ireland. The combination of educational segregation and the compulsory wearing of school uniforms ensures that most young people's religious background can easily be identified. As a result, the journey to and from school every day can be frightening and potentially dangerous for those children who live on interfaces or must cross through the territory of the other community in order to get to and from school:

My school is in a Protestant area, and me, her mate, my ex-mate, and her big sister were all walkin' up to school, you know, the way we were told not to go up alone… These wee lads came down and jumped us and started beating us up. We fought back and we went up to school and told our principal. My

principal phoned my mummy and told her to phone the police … They said they won't do nothin'. My mummy brought me to the hospital. I had bruised kidneys. (Catholic Female, Newlodge)

Children reported attacks and abuse on the way to school as regular occurrences in areas where children had to cross interfaces, or where children from both Catholic and Protestant schools had to travel by bus together. One Catholic female described how she had learned to 'keep her head down' in a school where Catholics were in the minority, which she perceived to be bigoted, and where staff attitudes were complicit with the bigotry.

Several young people who had experienced traumatic Troubles-related events described how they developed problems at school. One young person had experienced flashbacks:

I was sitting in Maths class. I was kind of daydreaming. I looked over at the door and I saw him standing there…he [her attacker] was just standing there, and I could see everything except for his face. He just pointed at me and says, 'You're next!' And the next thing you know, I got up out of my seat and I ran to the back of the classroom. I shrivelled up into this wee ball at the back of the classroom and I just hid, the whole class sitting looking at me going 'my God, she must be mental or something'. (Protestant Female, Lurgan)

Some respondents commented that their education and schoolwork had suffered as a result of Troubles-related incidents. After witnessing the fatal shooting of her aunt, one Catholic female found that she had less control over her behaviour and became disruptive at school:

I got threw out of school so I did. My behaviour just went wild. I was never cheeky or anything [before], but now I am…I'm nasty. If I don't get what I want I start moaning. I was never like that. I've always said there's a quare change in me. But at first - see whenever I was with my aunt whenever she was killed? My mummy thought I was acting, you know, getting to stay off school and all. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

Some other interviewees reacted to traumatic events differently. One Protestant female whose home had been continually attacked by Loyalists due to her father being in the police described how she had dealt with her situation by throwing herself into her schoolwork, yet her sister's school performance suffered:

I just blocked it all out. I threw myself into my school work. I did my college entrance exams and came out one of the top people…my school work went up, hers went down.(Protestant Female, Lurgan)

In a number of interviews, the description of the responses from teachers and the schooling system in general, would suggest a lack of training to enable teachers to deal with children suffering from the effects of witnessing and experiencing traumatic events caused by the Troubles. Several children reported punitive and unsympathetic treatment by the teachers when suffering the long-term impact of a traumatic experience, which the teacher or school was either unaware of, or didn't regard as relevant to the child's behaviour. One interviewee who prevented herself from going to sleep because of persistent nightmares after she witnessed a killing described her experience at school at that time:

I was forever getting threw out so I was, suspended and allI, was always tired, always trying to go to sleep. Then the teachers would shout. And then I'd throw the books across the classroom. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

Overall, the interviews suggested strongly that schools were ill-equipped to recognise and deal with the effects of the Troubles on individual children who were either exposed to traumatic events or, as in the case of children of the security forces or prisoners, living with ongoing family stress as a result of the impact of the Troubles on them and their families.

3.7 Community Experience of the Troubles

There has been considerable geographical variation in the amount and severity of exposure of people in Northern Ireland to the effects of the Troubles. Elsewhere, we have documented geographical variations in the Troubles related death rate across Northern Ireland (Fay et al., 1999). Exposure is highest in North and West Belfast, in the Northern border counties and in the Craigavon area. Since we were concerned with establishing the impact of the Troubles on children and young people, we ensured that a significant number of our interviewees were drawn from these areas. However, many areas of Northern Ireland have experienced considerably less Troubles-related violence than these areas, and although some of our interviewees were drawn from areas such as Coleraine, it is necessary to exercise caution when attempting to generalise about young people's experience. The scale of violence experienced by other young people in Northern Ireland may be substantially less (or in some cases more) than that experienced by those interviewed for this study.

However, the most extreme experiences described here are by no means unique, and will be reported by other children and young people living in areas that have been badly affected by segregation, militarisation, paramilitarisation, sectarianism and Troubles-related violence. There was considerable variation in Troubles-related experience among the cohort interviewed for this study. In comparatively peaceful areas certain events such as a bombing or shooting had a significant impact on the community, whereas in more troubled areas, such events were taken for granted, and regarded as common-place:

I think for this area, we haven't been as affected as some other places, you know, constant violence. But I just know the one incident with the bomb just over ten years ago…that had a big impact in Enniskillen and the people who were hurt by it haven't forgotten about it. (Protestant Female, Enniskillen)

A Catholic bar, the Rising Sun, in Greysteel on Halloween night about…five years ago - Two masked men walked in dressed in overcoats or whatever and shouted 'Trick or Treat' and opened fire on the whole bar killing quite a number of people, I think up to double figures. (Catholic Female, Eglinton)

In other areas, Troubles-related violence was a more regular occurrence - even the norm. Street violence was commonly reported in interface areas and often took the form of attacks on people attempting to cross an interface, or in rioting with the other community or the security forces. Most interviewees described having witnessed, participated in or heard about riots in their areas, although the frequency varied according to location:

I remember at one stage they were burning cars then, I can't remember why, they were burning some cars out the road. I remember having to go past them to go down to my friend's house and I had to run past them. I remember being frightened at that stage, having to run past cars on fire. (Catholic Female, Crossmaglen)

When young people were asked to explain the cause of riots, they offered a range of explanations. Some explanations relied on the antagonistic relationship between neighbouring Catholic and Protestant areas:

Where Catholics and Protestants come face to face… they'll clash, so they will…Well, if there's fightin', people will just come out, and they'll start shouting, and then they'll start throwing things. (Protestant Female, Sunnningdale, Belfast)

One Protestant interviewee felt that it was sectarian, but it was also related to boredom, and provided young people with something to keep them occupied, an activity:

Just 'cause it's different communities. Different religions. Something to do. (Protestant Female, Sunningdale, Belfast)

The same interviewee went on to explain the futility and meaninglessness of rioting:

I don't even think they have a reason… I don't even know what starts it off, 'cause it's pointless. 'Cause nobody wins. (Protestant Female, Sunningdale, Belfast)

Rioting between the two communities was more common during the summer months, according to interviewees:

It really gets rough in the marching season. (Catholic Male, Derry Londonderry)

Disputes over contentious marches tend to take place in the summer, notably the infamous Drumcree dispute in the Portadown area, the effect of which is often felt across Northern Ireland. The summer is also a time when young people are off school and, in some communities, there is a dearth of recreational activities and diversions for young people during the summer holidays:

I always start getting scared, I was just scared the whole year and even if there was no trouble until the summer, that's when everything started to go bad. (Catholic Female, Derry Londonderry)

Although street violence was most commonly reported in interface areas, other areas, such as those en route to a march venue, also experienced violence. Disputes about marching routes were not unique to the Drumcree area. One interviewee described a perennial dispute in her village:

You see there's people, there's the Orange Hall down there at the bottom of the town and the church is up there …they want to march through the Protestant side which they could go up and round and down and down by the back without starting riots, but they want to come straight up the town just to sicken us and that's where all the rows start. (Catholic Female, Keady)

Many people throughout Northern Ireland attempt to go on holiday in order to avoid this period. For some living in Nationalist areas, tensions can be high when Orange marches are allowed to walk through their area. The tension is often due to a sense of being confined into a restricted space by the blocking of roads by security forces. In some contested situations the presence of protestors is combined with the restriction of movement, parents attempts to control young people's activities and movements and the security forces presence. This can be very challenging to some young Catholic inhabitants.

Although the 12th July was considered by most interviewees to be a particularly volatile period, experiences were different for Catholics and Protestants. For those young Protestants who participated in the parades, it was seen as a celebration, with alcohol playing a prominent part:

Most people go to see the parades, so they do… in the city centre… (Protestant Female A, Sunningdale)

Then they go home and get drunk again. (Protestant Female B, Sunningdale)

We just stand around and sing. People are drunk. (Protestant Female A, Sunningdale)

Paramilitaries were also perceived by many of our interviewees to have a prominent role in many communities. Some interviewees were aware of the presence of paramilitaries but had had little direct contact with them, whilst for young people in other communities, encounters with paramilitaries were regular occurrences. Some interviewees criticised local paramilitaries for trying to control young people through, for example, enforcing nightly curfews for people under a certain age. There was little for them to do in the local area, yet when they stood around, they were asked to move on by paramilitaries:

We stand at the corner, but then the Provies come down…because there's people complaining about the noise and all. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

Several interviewees felt that they were being harassed, and seen primarily as a nuisance in their communities, rather than members of the community with needs in their own right.

Some interviewees described the role of paramilitaries in policing anti-social behaviour. Some interviewees resented the assumption of this role by paramilitaries, but it was not clear whether these young people would

have accepted anyone else in this role. In communities such as New Lodge, vigilantes who were not formally members of paramilitary groups, but perceived themselves as having a policing role within the community, were criticised on the grounds that they imposed unreasonable or over-strict rules on young people:

The vigilantes are really annoying. They stand at the corner at Dices every summer, and you have to be up for nine o'clock. That shouldn't be right. Twelve, fourteen, fifteen year olds have to be up for nine o'clock! (Catholic Female, New Lodge).

Many interviewees had ambivalent attitudes to the paramilitaries in their own community. On the one hand, many young people perceived them as necessary for the protection of the community, yet on the other hand also held them responsible for creating trouble or doing wrong on occasions.

Interviewees' exposure to the other community and their experience of segregation varied according to the area they lived in. The young people interviewed lived in a range of different community settings, rural, urban, mixed, enclave and interface, thus they had a wide variety of experiences:

The town… would be mostly Protestant, but you'd have Protestants at one end and Catholics at the other. (Protestant Female, Lurgan)

Those interviewees who lived in mixed communities described some positive relationships with members of the other religion living in the same community:

The area we live in now - the street is totally mixed. There's been no trouble at all up there, whereas in Wyndam Street, when we moved out, there has been a lot of trouble there …Where we're living now, my wee brother - most of his friends are Protestants. (Catholic Female, North Belfast)

Other young people saw sectarian tension as the exception rather than the rule of relationships between the two communities in their area. However, other interviewees described incidents of sectarian intimidation and a resultant atmosphere of mistrust and fear. Several interviewees who lived in enclave communities reported feeling surrounded, isolated and insecure because of the situation of their community.

4. Impact of the Troubles

4.1 Personal impact

This section looks at the impact that growing up and living in a violent, divided society had on interviewees, their friends, peers, communities and families. Elsewhere, we have attempted to assess the various impacts of the Troubles using a survey instrument, and the results of this survey suggests a considerable amount of geographical variation in impact, and a close relationship between the level of impact and the amount of exposure to Troubles-related events (Smyth et al., 1999). It also suggests less gender difference in the impact of the Troubles. In interview, however, interviewees were not given extensive lists of options that would stimulate them to agree or disagree that they had experienced a particular form of impact. Questions were open-ended, with few prompts. Thus, it may be that interviewees' denial of the impact of the Troubles on them and those they know has led them to under-report.

Many interviewees had given little thought to the consequences of the Troubles on their lives, and for some, consideration of the impact of the Troubles on their lives was a painful process. This was particularly true of the young people who had very severe and intense experiences of the Troubles, although not all interviewees fell into this category. The variety of reported impacts were wide ranging both in their nature and intensity. Some patterns of response emerged, such as withdrawal from friends and family after exposure to particularly severe experiences. However, interviews conducted with more than one member of the same family demonstrate that there is considerable individual variation in response, even to the same event. Overall, the data shows that growing up during the Troubles had a severe emotional and psychological impact on some young people, whilst others were apparently less affected. One caution is necessary however. In earlier studies interviewees reported that they were apparently unaffected by exposure to severe events for many years and experienced a delayed reaction to the event, when faced with other life changes later in life (Smyth, 1995). It is similarly possible that interviewees in this study who are apparently relatively unaffected by their experiences at the time of interview will go on to experience delayed effects in the future.

Overall, more than twenty-five interviewees reported having known someone killed in Troubles related violence, and many more had known or witnessed someone they knew being attacked. Where the person killed had been a close relative or friend, particular distress was evident on the

part of interviewees. Several interviewees reported that they had become withdrawn for a period of time after the event. This is illustrated in the interviews with two siblings whose two brothers had been shot dead by Loyalists:

I felt that I just turned my back on everybody. I even turned my back on myself. You know, I felt, 'I don't feel loved and there is nobody there to love me'. I think my personality just changed completely. I felt so angry and I felt that it was very easy for somebody to manipulate me. And losing all their sense of respect and losing your sense of dignity….You don't feel you've got any worth in yourself. So you did go through that stage where, you know, I'll go and do my own thing. But I realise now, that what I was doing was only hurting myself and it wasn't getting me anywhere and that hurt was eating me. (Brother: Catholic Male, Portadown/Lurgan)

I was always very outgoing, always the centre of attention. Any parties there would have been, I would have been the first up to sing in front of everybody…I was involved in a lot of stuff and my music was important and I always had my running, I was always sporty and all that type of thing. Then, when that happened, it was like I was a completely different person, withdrawn and I always pushed people away. I never had any close friends. (Sister: Catholic Female, Portadown/Lurgan)

In such situations, some interviewees seemed to withdraw from relationships they had previously, turning their attention to themselves and their own emotions. As a result, some reported finding themselves increasingly isolated. In some cases, this was compounded by their own angry or aggressive behaviour, whose origins lay in their feelings of anger and frustration at what had happened. Frequently, this anger and aggression was targeted at close friends and family:

I sat every weekend night in the house because I had eaten the face off all my friends and I had been nasty with them. I didn't have a friend left and I had no one to go out with. (Protestant Female, Lurgan)

Everything, anybody who would have said 'R…, shut up!' or something, or anything! Any wee thing would have blown me up and I would go mad and I would shout. And I would go home and wreck my room and all, you know. I wouldn't have had many friends, because I just cracked up so easily and nobody could really handle that. (Catholic Female, Portadown/Lurgan)

Such anger was often aggravated by the perceived injustice of what had happened. This was common where the interviewee had witnessed a

killing or been bereaved, where the person killed was a civilian, and considered innocent and undeserving.

In many of the cases described to us in interviews, no prosecution had taken place in respect of the killing or attack. This lack of justice being seen to be done fostered a sense of powerlessness, injustice, and a lack of closure in several interviewees. Some interviewees described their anger that they had been forgotten about, or that their loss was given less attention than other Troubles-related events.

Some interviewees described an inappropriate sense of responsibility for deaths or losses that they had experienced. One young female who had witnessed the killing of her two brothers at the hands of a paramilitary group described her feelings of guilt after their deaths:

I always thought that because my mum didn't really talk to me and [my other brother] didn't talk, I thought they actually blamed me you know…I was also thinking…it was going through my head what could I have done…for a while I did feel blame. (Catholic Female, Portadown/Lurgan)

Even though she was faced with armed men, she felt that she could have done something to save her brothers. This feeling was also described by another interviewee who witnessed the death of her uncle:

Going up to the graveyard made you think back and all. 'Why didn't I shut our front door? and all - whenever I was told to'.

Q: So did you feel guilty?

Aye.

Q: You'd worked it out that if you'd have shut the front door he would have come in anyway?

No, he wouldn't have come in I thought. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

These feelings of guilt and regrets about not having done more are often unexpressed and other family members and friends are unaware of what the individual is feeling or thinking. Where a family has all suffered bereavement or other Troubles-related trauma, this tendency not to express individual thoughts and feelings can lead to a breakdown in communication within the family. One interviewee explained that individual members of the family were too focused on their own strong

feelings to pay attention or offer support to others in the family. Some interviewees also felt that certain subjects were considered too painful to be broached by family, friends and the wider community.

Other interviewees who were able to talk about their feelings to others described avoiding talking about the loss or trauma, in order to avoid upsetting other family members or friends:

I sort of kept it to myself and … not even inside friends. It's not something you like to spread about. (Catholic Male, Banbridge)

Some interviewees thought that the lack of opportunity to express feelings had negative consequences:

I think most people are afraid to talk to somebody. They just keep it bottled up so they do…It just hurts too much, so it does. The longer they keep it bottled up, their heart just turns to anger so it does. (Protestant Female, Shankill)

Not discussing or expressing feelings for many led to a sense of isolation and alienation:

I just wanted to hide away a lot, you know what I mean? At all times, I felt nervous when I met people, things like that there. And just basically coping with the loss of your two brothers, it wasn't something I got used to easy. (Catholic Male, Portadown/Lurgan)

Some interviewees described the range of effects that their traumatic experience had on them from extreme weight and hair loss:

But my weight went right down to 7 stone 4 or something and my hair was falling out and when I went down to the doctor he told me to run away on. I was lucky that my hair didn't turn white over night. And that was the sympathy I got from the doctor. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

to sleeping problems and nightmares:

The other one is that he starts chasing me round the school and everywhere I run in school, there he is. It's one of those dreams you see in a movie, you know, that you run into a room where there's only one door and you know he's behind you. The next thing you know, you turn round and there he is. No matter where I ran, I couldn't get him and he was chasing me and saying, 'You're dying next, you're going next. I'm after you now. I've got your mum. Now, I'm going for you'. (Protestant Female, Lurgan)

One interviewee described recurring flashbacks of the event that she witnessed and for some these flashbacks occurred many years after the event:

You'd hear the gunshots, or there's one that always stuck in my head was my brother R... He was like lying over the seat like that, and I've always had this noise in my head of his blood was pouring from his head because he was shot in the head. And I don't know why, but I can always imagine, like, the blood hitting a steel bowl. And there's always this kind of steely, plinky thing. And I always had that in my head. It would go through my head all the time. (Catholic Female, Lurgan/Portadown)

Several interviewees explained how their difficulties in concentrating and the aggressive behaviour that followed their traumatisation were misinterpreted by others, being seen as deliberately disruptive behaviour. This posed particular problems in school, where teachers did not always seem aware of the pupil's history or the difficulties faced by them, nor did they appear to be equipped to deal with such difficulties.

One female described how she ended up refusing to go to school because she had flashbacks each time she passed the place where her aunt had been shot dead in front of her. This place was on her route to school. No one in her family or her school was aware of this, and she was regarded as a poor attender, manifesting bad behaviour.

Several interviewees described experiencing periods of quite severe depression. The daughter of a police officer in Lurgan described coming close to suicide on more than one occasion, following years of intimidation as a result of her father's job:

I had sat in the middle of the floor with the knife. I had sat with the tablets. I mean, I knew which ones were strong and what ones weren't and, you know, I was ready for doing it. (Protestant Female, Lurgan)

All of these young people described enduring these experiences in isolation, each lacking a confiding relationship where they could discuss their terrors and grief and feelings of anger and guilt. This is in spite of having otherwise loving and close families and friends. The effect of the trauma seemed to cut them off from their previous close friends and family members:

After the initial shock and the doctors and all left, that was it, you were left to cope. And other than the neighbours calling in that was all the help we got. No one came near us. (Catholic Female, Newtownabbey)

Some interviewees described using a variety of methods of coping with their situation. Some described using drugs or alcohol. It was shocking to find that in many cases children as young as 12 years started using alcohol. However, it was not always clear whether alcohol abuse at such an early age was used as a coping mechanism or as the result of peer pressure and/or boredom. In some cases tablets were also used to cope with trauma:

I was on sleeping tablets for years, but I got addicted to them and then I went heavy on drink…The funny thing is, we never got any help, psychological help…I think that was the worst thing of the whole lot…In the early days, I used to wake up screaming…I have a local GP and she still is very understanding, but she was giving me the sleeping tablets and then she told me no more… (Catholic Male, Dublin)

Some of those interviewed had been offered various forms of emotional support or psychological help. Some only saw mental health professionals as part of their assessment for compensation:

I went to counselling once, but that was only to be assessed for compensation and they gave me a load of little blocks, you know that you would give a three year old, and I flung them at the man. (Catholic Male, Dublin).

However many described the difficulties they faced in making use of counselling support, due to their reluctance to talk about what had happened to them.

Several of the interviewees had actually been physically injured in bombings, shootings, punishment beatings or sectarian attacks. Some described having medical treatment for physical injuries that were temporary, and were successfully healed. However one adult interviewee injured as a teenager in a bomb in Dublin described undergoing successive surgical interventions that had continued to the time of interview. He had been quite badly disabled as a result of his injuries, and experienced difficulties securing employment.

Several interviewees who had lived through dreadful experiences were impressive in their ability to reflect on their experiences and draw lessons from them. Some were able to reflect on the strategies and methods that they had used to come to terms with what had happened to them:

It was sort of good to talk your way through the whole thing. In a way, it was basically breaking them down, you know, getting rid of them…. [I learned]

basically how to deal with emotional things better than I used to and I learned a bit more about myself inside…basically what sort of person I am. (Catholic Male, Banbridge)

This interviewee saw a positive aspect to his experience in that he had acquired a new skill as a result of having to deal with his very difficult experiences of the Troubles.

4.2 School and educational impact

Conflict between rival factions within a community, such as during the Loyalist feud, can create problems amongst pupils and provide a dynamic for bullying or intimidation. Travelling to and from school, particularly in areas such as North Belfast where the territory is fragmented and where the two communities and their respective schools are in such close proximity to one another, can cause major conflict between pupils. School uniforms provide a means of identifying what 'side' a young person is on, and simply wearing a school uniform and being in the 'wrong place' can have violent consequences. In several areas, including North Belfast, schools have staggered their finishing times, so that pupils from rival factions do not get out of school at the same time. Bussing, and the coordination of buses, is another way in which schools have tried to contain and limit the tendency towards violence amongst pupils. All of this is managed by pupils and teachers, particularly those in marginalised communities, in addition to the everyday challenges of deprivation, lack of motivation for education, and ordinary bullying that are unfortunately regular features of schools in many inner city or deprived areas. In many areas of Northern Ireland, sectarian violence and Troubles-related issues provide an added dimension to these challenges.

Violence in schools

According to the pupils of one school in a Protestant area of Belfast, such violence was a daily occurrence:

There's fighting nearly every day at break time and in the lunch time and after school. (Protestant Female, Shankill, Belfast)

Fighting seemed to be more common among males, although there were also a number of references to female violence both within the school environment and outside on the streets.

Understanding from teachers

One interviewee who had been involved in fighting described how her

school principal was able to recognise the underlying cause of her behaviour – the imprisonment of her father – and exercised leniency:

See in school when I was fighting, I got my head through the window and our principal just felt sorry for me and she says 'You're under a lot of strain, so I'll just let you away with it', but I was in a bad mood. (Protestant Female, Shankill)

However, the interviewee did not give the impression that there was any engagement with her that would help her understand her behaviour, and assist her to find more acceptable ways of managing her feelings. Other interviewees painted a less sympathetic picture of their teachers:

Our teachers just don't listen. I think our teachers are glad to get out at the end of the day. (Protestant Male, Shankill, Belfast)

Another interviewee distinguished between teachers listening to pupils' personal problems and their problems related to community issues:

They'll listen to you, but not about the community or anything. They would listen to you if you had any problems but that's all. (Protestant Female, Shankill, Belfast)

In a school environment where community tensions influence the day to day operation of the school and where violence and threats are not uncommon, perhaps this is an understandable limit set by teachers.

Violence was not limited to fights between pupils. Attacks on teachers also occurred frequently in some schools. In one case, we were told that one pupil reminded a teacher who was considering disciplining this pupil that the parent was a well-known local paramilitary leader.

Teachers' time and energy were on many occasions absorbed by coping with disruptive pupils, at the expense of their educational goals. In such circumstances, it seems understandable schools seemed to give up on certain disruptive pupils who are not yet school leaving age, and take steps to exclude them from school. This might well facilitate the education of the remaining children, but has serious consequences for the excluded pupils:

There's one young fella in our club and he's just brilliant, you know. And he's been put out of school. Basically, the teachers had no interest in them and the stories they were coming in and telling us were horrific, the way they were

treated in school, you know. And he's not old enough to get a job. He can't get one anyway because he's got no qualifications. And he's sort of - he's lost! He's just completely - the school won't take him back. He can't be employed. (Catholic Female, Youth Worker, Belfast)

Another youth worker from North Belfast reported that many young people were being excluded from school because the school could not cope with their behaviour. In the opinion of the youth worker, exclusion led to the young people being even more disconnected from the adult world, and resorting to even worse behaviour. This trend seemed to be common to several areas.

One youth worker argued that the black market and petty crime were so much the norm in some areas that they presented an alternative way of earning a living for young people excluded from school, and therefore they required no educational qualifications.

However, the cease-fires, the peace process and the consequent influx of European Peace and Reconciliation Funding was seen to have provided some relief from this bleak scene. European money had increased education and employment opportunities for young people in some areas:

It's brilliant. It's unbelievable. I mean, there were young people there who were leaving school who really didn't think they had any hope at all. And they were getting trainee positions where they were actually getting a wage and being trained as well. I mean that is a positive change…that came from the cease-fires. (Catholic Female, Youth Worker, Belfast)

In common with other institutions in Northern Ireland, schools seem to maintain a form of silence about issues of division, conflict and sectarianism (Smyth et al., 2001).

4.3 Impact of the Troubles on the family

The most severe form of impact described by interviewees was the death of a family member. A significant proportion of interviewees had lost a member of their immediate or extended family as a result of the conflict during their childhoods:

I lost a brother there. He was my best brother. He was dead close to me, …He was killed. The INLA shot him. Then his girl had his wee child two weeks after he was killed. And that wrecked me so it did. It's wrecked our whole family.

'Cause he was the special one out of the whole family, so he was. I could talk to our F… about anything, so I could. (Catholic Female, Belfast)

The whole family were emotionally distressed - 'wrecked'- and this young woman struggled in the context of a grief-stricken household to come to terms with the loss of her confidante brother, her 'best brother'. In addition to the painful and frightening individual reactions that young people go through in the aftermath of such events, they must also deal with the impact on the family. The impact of such events on parents was frequently described by young people in interview. Some young people worried about changes in their parent's behaviour:

My mummy's changed…in all different ways. I get out of school on a half day on Friday, and there'd be times that my daddy wouldn't be in and the child would be over, and she'd lift the child up to the photo and all and go, 'there's my son. Here's your dad.' You know, talk to the photo and all. And she never did that, not even with her mummy's photo or nothing. And at night she does not sleep. You'd be lying in bed and you'd hear the crying. Then she puts her fag out and then lights up one. All she does is smoke….Sure, my mummy used to go to darts. But now she stopped darts whenever [my brother] was killed. She used to go to bingo and all. And now she'll not go out at all (Catholic Female, Belfast)

One interviewee described how everybody in her family 'was wrapped up in their own grief'. This was a recurring theme in interviews describing the severe impact on the family. Communication between family members was often infrequent and in some cases family members vented their anger and frustration on each other:

Nobody talked to each other…Mum would sit in the kitchen, dad would sit in the living room, Liam would sit in his room and I would sit in my room and there was no communication apart from 'pass the butter' and stuff like that…We'd blow our lids at each other all the time, like, for no reason…I was always angry with everybody. (Catholic Female, Lurgan/Portadown)

This same interviewee went on to describe her father's attempts to address the silence and facilitate discussion between family members but that this was hindered by not wanting 'to upset anybody else'.

Another interviewee, whose family had not been bereaved, explained how her policeman father broke the silence and insisted on talking about the ongoing risks the family faced:

Dad…he explained it all to us, everything that had happened and he was all, you know, 'I hope you're right about this', and he sat down and talked to us and he said 'if you need help, you need help. Don't be afraid. We're going to talk about this as a family' and all this stuff…We've always been very close as a family. (Protestant Female, Lurgan)

In the absence of loss, perhaps such conversations seem more purposeful. For families who had lost a member, talking as a family unit was too painful. For some children the process of coming to terms with the loss of someone close was accompanied by the need to adjust to having only one parent. In some cases the surviving parent was disabled by grief and shock, leaving the child to cope as best they could:

Once we realised that my father was dead, the whole family unit sort of went out the window …and I felt much of the responsibility was left to me. To try and organise the house, the people in the house, the family. Simple things like shirts for the funeral, ties. (Catholic Female, Newtownabbey)

Some interviewees became responsible and took on adult roles, feeling the need to be strong for the whole family, this often concealed their own underlying grief and need for support. Others reacted differently, and in retrospect, some interviewees felt that they had taken out their anger on their parents. One young female described how she had become 'nasty' towards her family after her older brother was killed:

I've just slipped into being cheeky and all, telling my Ma to shut up and I hate her, she's a fat bitch, and all that there. All that kind of stuff. I don't mean it like, but it just comes out. (Catholic Female, Belfast)

However, the 'nasty' behaviour gave rise to feelings of guilt as the individual recognised that her mother was trying to be strong for the whole family.

Other interviewees described how they constantly worried about the safety of their family members after an incident or loss. In some cases these worries began at a very young age. In one case, two young females described how they frequently worried that their father would be attacked while at work as a police officer. These worries started after attacks on the family home and intimidation of the parents:

Probably from when I was about five or six whenever I first found out that my Dad was shot…and then whenever he went out to work, I'd get really really worried about him, but I'm not any more because I know he can handle himself. (Protestant Female, Lurgan)

In such circumstances of ongoing risk, where the child has clear evidence that there is danger, the child rationalised that she need not worry because 'he can handle himself.' The rationalisation is possibly linked to something the father himself told the child, in an attempt to reassure her. For some families, avoiding thinking about the risk or denying it altogether is an important method of coping with stress on a daily basis.

Some young interviewees described the lengths to which the family went in order to feel safe:

It was scary because we used to have a big cage and all on our stairs and when we were going to bed, Mummy had to put all the security on the doors and all. My Mummy was scared of anybody coming into the house, you know, with guns or anything while we were in. (Protestant Female, Shankill, Belfast)

Another young male interviewee whose father was in the security forces described the routine security checks that his father made, and his own feeling of having to protect the family home:

Dad had a couple of security things he used around the car and stuff like that, you know for car bombs and things … I would say I probably have got used to staying about the house because I have to. I like being here anyway, sort of protect the place if you know what I mean. (Catholic Male, Banbridge)

Several interviewees reported that their families had felt stigmatised by the wider community following a death or deaths in the family. They explained this by the assumption that others made, that the victim must have been targeted because of paramilitary connections. It seemed as if a form of victim blaming operated in such circumstances:

A lot of even Catholic neighbours wouldn't even say hello to us and wouldn't come to visit us or anything. They stayed well clear. I don't know, they must have thought they were involved in the IRA or some of them organisations, and they didn't want maybe the loyalists or something seeing them visiting us and then they'd get attacked or something like that there. We were isolated in that way. People didn't associate with us. (Catholic Female, Lurgan/Portadown)

A number of interviewees felt that their families were stigmatised and consequently victimised by the security forces. These tended to be people from a Nationalist background. One interviewee described how she believed that the police had 'set up' the killing of her uncle:

Now, the peelers set it up As I ran out on to the street, there was two peelers at the bottom of the street to make sure they [the killers] got away all right. So, the peelers set it up. About seven months before that there, the peelers had told [my uncle] that he was going to get killed as well, so they did. They've just something against our family and they never ever liked them. (Catholic Female, Belfast)

The feeling of being vulnerable to the security forces was not limited to Catholic interviewees, but was more common among them than among Protestants.

Some interviewees described how as a result of intimidation or other attacks, their family had been forced to move house, more often than not to less suitable accommodation. The loss of the family home, sometimes in addition to other losses was a big blow to some families. Suddenly having to move house created disruption for the whole family. Often, the housing provided in such emergencies was unsuitable and inadequate for the needs of the family. Some families also lost their belongings or were burnt out of their home:

On that particular night that we moved out there was 200 families moved in one night and had furniture lost, had houses burned. Our house was burned after we left …(Catholic Male, Lurgan)

This interviewee reflected on the impact that the loss of a home and displacement had on his family concluding that it had a detrimental effect on him and his mother.

Another interviewee described how her family lived with continual fear and constantly had to move around:

My Mummy was scared of anybody coming into the house, you know, with guns or anything while we were there and that's why they moved away and then we got a house down in Crumlin and then we moved back up to Woodvale because most of the family is up there. (Protestant Female, Shankill, Belfast)

Another feature of the Troubles that has had a major impact on many families is the high level of imprisonment as a result of the Troubles. Imprisonment, largely but not exclusively of men, meant that families often had to cope with the absence of a family member, usually a parent, for lengthy periods. One interviewee described how her brother had been in prison for four years. Another interviewee had a brother who had been sentenced to sixteen years. One young female described how her father

was in jail for five years and she had only been able to see him once a week:

When he did about four and a half years, he started getting parole, getting out for a couple of days and that. But my Daddy was really close to my Mummy's Mummy, and when she died, they wouldn't let him out. And it really killed him so it did, because my Mummy was on her own then. Because that was her Mummy and Daddy both dead. And we just had to help my Mummy and that and just keep our heads up and keep going. (Protestant Female, Shankill, Belfast)

The absence of a parent often puts additional pressure, not only on the remaining parent, but also on the children, particularly the older and female children. In most cases, there was a sense of injustice at their imprisonment, that they had been wrongly accused, punished excessively, or punished for fighting against an unjust state. However, one interviewee described her guilt and horror at discovering the involvement of her relatives in perpetrating acts of violence. Another interviewee described the difficulties her family faced in adjusting back to 'normality' when her father was released from prison:

It was alright, but it was still a bit confusing, you know, having him in the house because you weren't really used to him once he got out on parole and all being in the house, but he's very nervous because my daddy doesn't like the door knocking late at night. If he hears the door, he'll be first up, but we're all right now because when we used to live round the Woodvale, me Mummy still had the doors secured you know with drop bars and all, but we've moved down to a different street and we're all right now, and he's got out. He's working and all now. (Protestant Female, Shankill, Belfast)

A number of interviewees were from mixed marriage families. These interviewees did not appear to consider their mixed family background to have caused them many problems, except that perhaps that it made them more aware of sectarian divisions at a very young age. One young female actually felt that having one Catholic parent and one Protestant parent meant she was better able to deal with sectarian harassment:

They're a mixed marriage. My Mummy is a Protestant and my Daddy is a Catholic, so like, they were kind of happy with it….Well, whenever they said 'Fenian' or something, I'd just say I'm only half Fenian. (Catholic/Protestant Female, Derry Londonderry)

Although many of the young people interviewed said that they were unable to talk to their families about their fears and concerns,

particularly where they related to an experience which had been traumatic for the whole family, many also described their families as very supportive. They often cited proximity to family as a reason for planning to stay in Northern Ireland in the future, in spite of the Troubles:

Both mum and dad come from big families, so I had a wide range of relatives which gave us all the support. (Catholic Female, Lurgan/Portadown)

However, when some interviewees thought about having children of their own and bringing them up in Northern Ireland, it gave them some understanding of their own parent's concerns about their children's safety. Several interviewees expressed frustration at the restrictions on their lifestyle imposed by the Troubles:

If I did live here and I had kids, I would probably be just like the way my Mummy is now, always complaining and not let me do nothing because of the way it is. Because, like, if Northern Ireland wasn't as bad as it was, I'd be allowed to go more places than I'm allowed to go. My Mummy is always afraid of something happening and I don't want to have a boring life. (Catholic Female, New Lodge, Belfast)

Overall, young people interviewed were keen to think for themselves, but were also closely tied to their families, who were a major motivation for remaining in Northern Ireland. They also closely identified with their communities and with their religious or political grouping.

4.4 Impact on peers and peer relationships

It was evident from the interviews that the Troubles had influenced peer relationships between young people. The Troubles determines to a greater or lesser extent who young people can form and maintain relationships with. The extent of this influence depends to some extent on the geographical area that the young person lives in, and the opportunities he or she has for mixing beyond their own immediate area. For some young people those opportunities are limited to formal cross community activities aimed at improving relationships between the two communities. One young woman described how the success of her involvement in such a scheme and her developing friendship with a young woman from the other side of the sectarian divide was affected by the wider context in which they both lived:

When we were younger, the club we went to took us on loads of different cross-community things and I made friends with a girl from the Shankill, from

Glencairn. And me and her just hit it off right away. It was brilliant, really really brilliant. And when we came back, we would have met in town and dandered about the town. And I could take her into our area and she'd have took me in. She phoned me one night then and said that she couldn't meet me again. She was pulled and was told never to bring a Fenian into the area and what was going to happen to her and what was going to happen to me. And I was devastated, like. (Catholic Female, Newhill)

Many young people felt under significant pressure from peers within their own community to mix only with people of the same religion. As a result, even many of those who had resisted such pressures initially often found it too stressful and dangerous to maintain mixed relationships. Yet other young people reported friendships that seemed to be able to survive in spite of the obstacles:

My best mate's mate, she was from the other side. She's really, really nice, so she is and there's no difference in her - just a different religion. She's just really dead-on, so she is. (Protestant Female, Sunningdale, Belfast)

Some young people had positive experiences, and had encountered no obstacles to crossing the divide, such as a young Protestant woman who dated a Catholic boy:

I was going out with a Catholic when I lived in my other area and nothing was said about it. (Protestant Female, Shankill)

In the young people's experience there were some areas that were more tolerant of mixing than others. Young people's exposure to more tolerant communities heightened their awareness of the restrictions placed on their own lives by segregation:

In Limavady, Catholics and Protestants got on, and that's what I liked about them. Because up here, you can't even live where you want to live. (Protestant Female, Shankill, Belfast)

Another young female from the same community expressed her frustration with the status quo in relation to segregation:

I don't know why there's such a thing as Protestants and Catholics. It's just stupid. (Protestant Female, Shankill, Belfast)

In a segregated community, especially the highly conflicted segregated communities that some of our interviewees lived in, experiences of

sectarian violence and harassment often led to negative perceptions of the whole group or community to which the perpetrator belonged. Amongst the interviewees it seemed as if many young people who had more positive mixed relationships at an earlier age, or had been less aware of differences between Catholic and Protestants, found themselves mixing less as they grew older, and their exposure to sectarianism accumulated. In the absence of positive contact and relationships with the other community, it became easier for young people to demonise them.

The Troubles, and the separation of the two communities (which can be seen as both a cause and an effect of the Troubles) influences the content and dynamic of peer relationships. One young woman was frank about her feelings of hatred for the other community:

I hate all Catholics because it's their fault [N…] is dead belonging to me and I can't help the way I feel. I just hate all of them. (Protestant Female, Shankill, Belfast)

Another young Protestant felt that the Troubles were not all Catholics' fault, only the fault of the hard-core minority:

It's not down to all Catholics…It's just down to bitter ones. (Protestant Female, Shankill, Belfast)

Particular symbols or rituals associated with the other community were perceived by some young people as deliberate provocation:

We go to tech on a Friday afternoon and there are Protestants that go there but they wear poppies and all just to sicken us like. (Catholic Female, Strabane)

A young Protestant woman, however, pointed out the need to see the other community's point of view, even in the wake of terrible losses:

Do you see the way the Catholics killed the, just say the Shankill bomb, I think we should put that in the Catholics' point of view because there have been Catholics that have been shot and I think Protestants should consider the Catholics point of view. (Protestant Female, Shankill, Belfast)

One young Catholic female reported a change in attitude after realising the pressures on her to avoid forming relationships with Protestants:

You used to call them everything…I used to hate them, call them everything. And if you're ever caught talking to them, that's it. 'If I catch you near them

'uns again' you know what I mean? You were never allowed near them. You were always told they were bad news. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

A number of interviewees thought that it might be easier for their generation to meet young people of a different religion, because of the opportunities available to them that were not available to their parents' generation:

I think it's easier 'cause there's more groups to get yous connected. And there's more people trying for peace now. And you get to know more different types of Protestants, ones that would really start on you and nice ones too. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

For some young people these difficulties can mean that their relationships with their peers are severely constrained. One young Catholic male from Banbridge whose father was a police officer was not at liberty to disclose personal information to other young people from either community. When asked whether he had come across other young people whose parents were in similar occupations, he seemed to indicate that even then, it would be difficult to discuss the anxieties relating to his father's job:

Q: Have you ever met other people who have been in similar situations to yourself?

A: I would say I probably have, but then again, it is quite a personal thing. I don't think they really would have said anything about it. I don't know any close friends that have been in the same situation. (Catholic Male, Banbridge)

This interviewee also felt that, while he had been able to forge friendships, that if he disclosed his father's profession to peers other than his close friends, that he would be stigmatised by both Catholics and Protestants.

For young people with parents in the security forces, safety, both in terms of personal, family and parental safety and safety of peers was a consideration when inviting friends over to stay. In one such family, his parents phoned his friend's parents in advance to warn them of the dangers. One young person with a parent in the security forces had worried when friends visited. The level of isolation that these young people reported was considerable, in addition to the stress of living with ongoing threats to the family's safety.

4.5 Impact on young people's communities

In this part of the report, we examine interviewees' accounts of their communities, and their observations of the impact of the Troubles on these communities. Many of these young people have been born into communities and have never known anything other than life as it is lived there. The close knit nature of the community often means that it plays a greater part in the life of the young person than for young people living in relatively loose knit suburban areas. Similarly, the impact of the young person on the community and the network of relationships within it can be considerable. Young people living in rural areas seem to have a different experience of the Troubles, and of the communities they live in, some of whom were indeed tight knit. In the previous section, it emerged that some of the children of security forces reported a rather different relationship with the community, due to security considerations.

Some young people lived in areas that had remained relatively unaffected by the Troubles for many years. One young person from a rural area that had seen very little Troubles-related violence described the impact on the community of a gun attack on the local public house in a nearby Catholic area, which killed eight local people. The young person began their account by using the name of the village, Greysteel, as the name of the shooting incident:

Greysteel, which was at Halloween a couple of years ago, that was the first real thing anywhere in this area that stuff like that started to happen round here. And it hit home really hard, right enough, round here…People started to get more scared, everybody just talked about it, they all talked about it but it never really seemed to matter or to affect, but people started to get scared and bars started to put bouncers on and get more security. The Rising Sun now has cameras and a buzzer system. They won't let you in unless they look at you and let you through the door. Stuff like that there started to happen and it was just a general feeling and tensions. (Catholic Female, Eglinton)

In areas that had experienced relatively little violence, events such as bombings or shootings can affect the community in a variety of ways. This young person described a heightened sense of fear and vulnerability, the installation of security devices, and suspicion of outsiders coming in. For many communities in Northern Ireland that have been exposed to repeated attacks over the decades of the Troubles, security precautions, the presence of police, army and paramilitaries on the streets have become everyday routines, consequently fear and suspicion of outsiders has become part of the taken-for-granted culture of the community.

One interviewee in a Nationalist area reported that the two communities did not have equal consideration in matters of expressing community identity:

If there's a mixed area too, like, they put all their red, white and blue everywhere and fly the flag, but if the Catholics want to fly a Tricolour like in a mixed area, it would just be sabotaged. (Catholic Female, Strabane)

Another interviewee explained how this translated into matters of young people's dress:

You couldn't go to Portrush in a Celtic top. You see plenty in Rangers tops. (Catholic Female, Strabane)

Identifying with your community, and dressing the way you would do in your own community was problematic for these young people. In such circumstances, some interviewees reported that they had a tendency to avoid mixed areas or those dominated by the other community.

Young people's fears were not limited to fears of the other community. One interviewee described how he related to his own community, after having been the target of several punishment attacks at the hands of paramilitaries from within his own community:

I still watch my back I still look over my shoulder. When I'm walking through alleyways, I walk really slow. If there is anybody standing there, I turn and go the other way, straight away. (Catholic Male, Derry Londonderry)

Interviews took place after the beginning of the peace process, and interviewees from areas badly affected by the Troubles reflected on the impact of the peace process on life in their community. While some saw little change, others acknowledged that some changes for the better had taken place, such as a decrease in tension and decreased military presence. However, this presented particular challenges to young people, according to one interviewee, who pointed out that younger people born into the Troubles had no experience of what peace would entail:

A lot of older people are now trying to settle back into the way things were, but some young people can't. We don't know what normal is. What's normal to us is rioting ten years ago, whereas normal to older people is thirty, thirty-five years ago. We don't know any different. (Catholic Female, Youth Worker, Newhill, Belfast)

This gap in young people's experiences seemed to make it difficult for some young people to visualize what a peaceful, integrated society and community would entail, even if they aspired to it:

Q: Do you like being in your own areas?
YP1: Used to it
Q: Do you think this place will ever be mixed?
YP2: No, they'll always stay in their different areas, so they will.
Q: What about the peace lines?
YP1: I think they'll always stay up.
YP2: Yeah, cause trouble'll just flare up over the simplest wee thing.
(Protestant Males, Sunningdale, Belfast)

One interviewee worked in a mixed, if predominantly Protestant, workplace. He explained that he did not feel able to engage in conversation with his work colleagues about political issues, limiting himself to correcting their misapprehensions about his own community.

Several interviewees, both Catholic and Protestant, complained that the other community were better treated and resourced than their own. In some cases they had evidence, such as the leisure centre nearby in a Protestant area, and in others, they had little actual information about life in the other community. Nonetheless, the feeling that they were less well off than the 'other side' was expressed by both Catholic and Protestant young people. One complaint that was common to young people in both communities was that there was nothing for young people to do:

The street corners are the only place you can really go. Like, there is youth clubs, but they're only on certain nights. And then you have to find something to do the rest of the nights. Even throughout the week, there's a youth club on a Wednesday night, and that's it. And then you're on the street corners and then you're told to move on. (Protestant Male, Sunningdale)

Many other young people complained of the restrictions in availability of youth provision, or its suitability to their needs. Youth club facilities were reported as rarely available at weekends, when young people had the most leisure. This, some of them explained, left them with little to do other than stand on street corners, and in some cases, to drink, smoke and take drugs. Other young people who were not involved in drinking, drug taking or causing a nuisance also complained that they were moved on by police, paramilitaries and other people living in the community.

Many young people in both communities felt alienated, marginalised and stigmatised by their own community. The dynamic between young people and the adults in their community was described by a young youth worker:

Anytime we've asked young people what they want, it's basically to get out of the area. A lot of them are in trouble with the paramilitaries, a lot of them are in trouble with peelers or cops or whatever. A lot of them are barred from youth clubs and are standing on the street corners, and these young people, they might not even be doing anything. I mean, a lot of the young people, they're just standing there. They have nowhere else to go. They've got a carry out and they want to stand on the street corner and just be with their mates and they might have a radio and that's it. But there's residents that are coming out and going 'Yous are standing here every night!' and all, and 'Yous are trying to steal that car!' and, 'Yous are doing this!' and the young people aren't doing anything! They're blamed for what other people are doing, a minority of young people are doing. And then the paramilitaries are involved and these young people then are being moved from street to street until basically, they're just excluded from the community altogether. (Catholic Female, Youth Worker, Newhill, Belfast)

This youth worker, close in age to the young people she worked with, argued that stigmatising young people in such a way, would only encourage them to behave in an anti-social way. This suggestion is supported by a number of interviews with young males previously or currently engaged in anti-social behaviour (Smyth et al., 2002).

In many of the interviews, a perception of powerlessness within their communities was portrayed and that they weren't treated with respect or taken seriously by adults at home, school, government – or anywhere. This perception was acknowledged by two of the young youth workers interviewed. One youth worker thought that young people's political views were rarely sought nor were young people consulted about political developments, even when these developments had potentially profound effects on young people's lives:

What's happened here is that, because of the conflict, young people aren't being given attention at home or on the street. Nobody wants to listen to them. Nobody wants to give them a voice and ask them what they want or how they feel about everything. It's all based around adults and how adults feel now. And now the prisoners are being released, how do the adults feel? And the need to get them back into the community - where young people have never really been given a place in the community, ever. (Catholic Female, Youth Worker, Newhill, Belfast)

Involving young people, and working with them, not at them, is not a new concept. Yet the task of translating the concept into practice, and injecting these principles into the reality of relationships between adults and young people, particularly in areas badly affected by the Troubles, is, it seems, not yet complete.

4.6 Impact on young people's political views

Connolly et al.'s (2002) work on the views of very young children demonstrates the pervasiveness of political socialisation in Northern Ireland. That study found that from the age of three, children in Northern Ireland show preferences for the flags from their own community, and adopted the attitudes of their community towards Orange marches and the police. The YouthQuest study found widespread disaffection amongst young people from the mainstream political process, strong feelings of being excluded from the peace process, and scepticism about politicians (Smyth and Scott, 2000). The interview data presented here showed extensive variation amongst young people in their political views and in their levels of interest and involvement in politics. Young people in Northern Ireland are more politicised than their equivalents in the rest of the United Kingdom or the United States, and report more anxiety about political events and political violence (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 1996). The YouthQuest survey found apathy about politics and scepticism about the capacity of the political process to deliver positive change was widespread amongst the young people surveyed. One young man of nineteen explained how his own apathy was linked to the behaviour of politicians and political parties:

I am not deeply into politics, to tell you the truth! But yeah! It has crossed my mind many times. I do vote, and sometimes you ask yourself, 'What is the point?' Because, you see, the situation we have at the minute here - I do believe the way forward is to sit down and talk! And you only have to look at the nonsense that is going on here, where one party will not sit down with another party because of something which is going on. (Catholic Male, Crossmaglen)

A minority of interviewees, mostly male and Catholic, acknowledged that they had a keen interest in political issues. In some cases, this interest had been stimulated by particular personal or community experiences of events during the Troubles:

The Rising Sun shooting - I lived just about a hundred yards from there…and then plus my Dad told me about Bloody Sunday and the enquiry and he told

me about that there, then that was it. I became more interested in politics from then. I started watching the news more and just kept an eye on how things were going. (Catholic Male, Greysteel)

Such interests, and openly expressed interest in politics, were not always welcomed in all settings. One young Catholic in a mixed educational setting reported discouragement for his interest from peers and teachers:

I've still got my interest, even the school teachers in here say that the only thing I talk about is the history of here, and that. (Catholic Male, Coleraine)

The fear of discussing potentially divisive issues, coupled with the widespread negative perception of politics in Northern Ireland as nothing more than bickering politicians and sectarian violence could perhaps lead to the expectation that young people would not have strong political views. This was not the case amongst the young people interviewed. Most young people interviewed expressed strong views on many political issues, such as policing, paramilitaries and explanations of the main responsibility for the conflict in Northern Ireland.

A considerable number of the young people interviewed expressed deep mistrust of the politicians and their ability or willingness to work for durable solutions to political conflict. Certain politicians in particular were the object of young people's distrust:

Ian Paisley - he just doesn't want it to stop, he just wants to be the leader of the fights. (Catholic Male, New Lodge)

The criticism was not limited to Northern Ireland politicians, but British politicians were also criticised:

Just men in suits - that's all they are. Tony Blair is a man in a suit with a big mouth. (Mixed Religion Male, Coleraine)

What was perceived by some young people as the pugnaciousness of certain political leaders was a further cause of alienation of those young people from politics:

Do you ever see the way Gerry Adams and Paisley always fight? Did you ever see the way the two of them fight? Why don't they just put them in a room and lock them in it until they sort it out? (Catholic Female, New Lodge)

Some young people's alienation sprang from what they observed as inconsistencies or hypocrisy in politicians' behaviour.

The lack of trust in politicians was perceived to damage the prospects for a successful peace process. There was a tendency amongst some of the young people to adopt a position of 'a curse on both your houses':

I think, like, if Sinn Fein were to wise up to themselves and Ian Paisley wised up to himself, everybody would be able to come together. (Catholic Female, New Lodge)

There was also a tendency amongst some of the young people to blame the conflict on politicians, without relating the views of politicians to their own fear, mistrust or reluctance to engage with the other community, which some of them spoke of. Other young people felt confident in the ability of dialogue to solve the problems and issues facing politicians and citizens in Northern Ireland. Those who were not willing to engage in dialogue were the only obstacle:

I do feel we have the powers and capabilities in this country to sort our problems out, but not until we get rid of people who will not sit down and talk. That is my belief that people have to listen to each other's views. (Catholic Male, Crossmaglen)

The interviewee did not specify how he proposed to get rid of those who refused to engage in dialogue, or how that would fit in to a democratic system. Young people clearly struggled with issues of dissent and diversity in political dialogue, perhaps due in part to the vehemence of dialogue in Northern Ireland, and in part to the relative novelty of inclusive dialogue in Northern Ireland's political process.

Other young people showed less alienation from politicians and declared sympathies for certain political parties, even though they had not had direct contact with them:

I think it's very difficult for older people to reach us but at the same time there are some people like, I don't know, I'm just thinking there's some people in the Alliance party who have you know generally the same beliefs as maybe us four who are all saying, you know, there shouldn't be any differences and all that kind of stuff. (Protestant Female, Enniskillen)

Some young people interviewed were identified with one or other political grouping. For some this had posed difficulties. One adult male

described being arrested and questioned as a result of his involvement in Republican politics. Most of the young people however were not members of any political party, nor had they ever been. Few of them expressed a desire to join a political party, or to become more involved in formal politics.

The failure of most political parties and politicians to engage with young people was raised in some interviews. Their frustration about being ignored or excluded was particularly apparent on the issue of the peace process:

David Trimble and Gerry Adams are talking and all, and us young ones should at least be invited up to the talks to listen to what they're saying about our future. (Mixed Religion Male, Coleraine)

One young man was moved to write to a politician, and went to find out how to set about this, but was discouraged with the response he met:

Like, I wanted to write a letter. I went down into the police station and said, "Could I write a letter to complain to David Trimble why we shouldn't be allowed to talk?" and the policeman …said, "Wise up son". (Protestant Male, Coleraine)

Attempts by young people to engage in politics can be construed as ridiculous, irrelevant, or as disruptive behaviour on the part of the young person. This is in the context of concerns about young people's participation in what has been referred to as recreational rioting in areas such as North Belfast, yet in the face of such concern, young people are not encouraged to participate non-violently in the political life of their community and society (Jarman and O'Halloran, 2000). Young people's sense of exclusion is compounded by the tacit acceptance on the part of many adults in Northern Ireland of their own exclusion from the political process. It is difficult for adults to envisage young people participating in a process that only adult elites have access to, and where adult participation is usually limited to voting in referenda or elections.

However, young people in some cases had substantially higher levels of political participation. Young people interviewed in Enniskillen described how they participated in a shadow youth council, which was elected as a junior shadow district council to represent young people in the district council area. They sat in the council chamber and were consulted by the adult council on some of the issues that the council dealt with that related specifically to young people:

I think they're beginning to try to [take seriously the issues of young people], I think they realise that we're the next generation. I think it was a long process, actually getting the councillors to agree to have a youth council and then eventually it sort of came on the ground and we had a big election and we had to canvass and we got manifestos done up and a PR [proportional representation] election, so it was, there was eight thousand young people in Fermanagh voted for us and really you know, we're proper.(Protestant Female, Enniskillen)

Other young people had experience of political education, through school or youth clubs. Several interviewees had been actively involved in citizenship programs through school or youth organisations. Such experiences were rare amongst interviewees, but those who had been exposed to such programmes were enthusiastic about them, and some of these young people seemed to have high levels of confidence and more considered political views. Only a small number of interviewees described having had direct contact with politicians, and what contact there was seemed to take place at youth conferences:

I do think you make an effort, I mean I've been to conferences like youth and democracy and stuff and we got to meet Assembly members, representative youth and we got to ask them questions and stuff, and I was asking Bairbre de Bruin questions and stuff … (Protestant Female, Enniskillen)

These examples, however, were the exception, and overall a strong sense of alienation from the political process was a recurring theme in the young people's accounts of their political lives and attitudes. Some of this alienation was attributable to their resentment at the lack of attention paid by politicians to the issues that affect young people's lives, such as bullying, cross-community activities and drug awareness.

The issue of the Good Friday Agreement was discussed with some young people not supporting the Good Friday Agreement because of specific aspects. The early release of politically motivated prisoners was unacceptable to one Protestant, who spoke for a substantial number of other interviewees:

Good Friday is bad. I don't care about Protestants or Catholics, but them men were put away for killing people and all and, like. Gerry Adams has just said 'Good Friday' and all, and they've let them ones out. Like, he's just letting them men out to kill more people. (Protestant Male, Coleraine)

Overall, most of the young people interviewed were supportive of the cease-fires. However, some were cynical about the prospects of them lasting for long:

I think they're good like, if they last. (Protestant Female, Sunningdale)

Others were cynical about the prospects of paramilitaries handing in or destroying their weapons – the decommissioning requirement of the Good Friday Agreement:

No, they'll never ever, and if they do give up their guns it doesn't mean to say that there's still not going to be riots, no way, it's just going to be violence for Northern Ireland until it sinks or something. (Catholic Male, Coleraine)

Other young people's cynicism was based on the continued paramilitary punishment attacks, which made claims by paramilitary groups that they were on cease-fire seem hypocritical:

Sure, when they called a cease-fire, a cease-fire wasn't on here. They are still running around doing people. They are still doing their punishment beatings. So, I can't see how that is a cease-fire. A cease-fire is everything called off, not just bombings and shootings. (Catholic Male, Derry Londonderry)

Several young people suspected that paramilitary groups stood to lose their racketeering money if the ceasefires lasted, so might not be sincere in their declarations that violence was over. However, one interviewee felt that there was a greater risk of punishment attacks if the cease-fire broke:

I don't want the cease-fires to break, so I don't. Then that means all the people getting knee-capped again. (Catholic Female, Belfast)

A sense of despair was expressed by many of the young people. Many felt frustrated with the failure of political changes on the macro level to bring about real change in their personal circumstances. Others had a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness to change their own circumstances and a general belief that things won't change. Yet others were acutely aware of how violence had become normalised in their communities. In spite of this, most of the young people remained opposed to violence as a means of achieving political goals:

I wouldn't say I support the IRA and what they do. All violence is wrong and shooting people because they are a Catholic or a Protestant is wrong. (Catholic Male, Greysteel)

Some young people were aware that because they came from a particular area or community, it was assumed that they supported violence for political ends.

Although many young people reported a similar alienation from the political process, a large majority also expressed a desire for peace. Quite a few wanted a different environment for their children than the one they themselves had grown up in:

If I ever have kids, I hope they would grow up in an environment that they would not have to worry about these things. (Catholic Male, Crossmaglen)

Many others aspired to an eradication of sectarian divisions and boundaries and the end of hostilities between the two communities:

I'd just like everybody to be equal and no fights and nothing. (Catholic Male, New Lodge)

When asked about whether they were optimistic about the prospects for peace, most young people expressed pessimism, some of which was related to the realisation that their community's political goals might not be realised right away:

I used not to be, but since the cease-fire broke I have got very pessimistic. I would hope in the future, that at the end of it all, that there would be a united Ireland and everybody, the Protestants, to realise that this is the best thing for everybody and they wouldn't be isolated. But I don't think…it's not going to come about in the next maybe fifty years at least. (Catholic Female, Crossmaglen)

Other young people were pessimistic because of the length of the conflict and the lack of success in obtaining peace in the past:

I don't think it'll happen because we've been trying for, what, the last twenty-six or twenty-seven years, like, and nothing else has changed. It's still the same as it was then. (Catholic Female, Derry Londonderry)

Some young people had very concrete ideas of what peace would entail. A number of young people expressed a desire for 'normality', yet were conscious that they had never experienced 'normality':

You know, you've been brought up in it and it's, like, to be truthful, none of us here know what it's like to live in peace, like. We've been living in the war all

our lives and it just doesn't seem as if it is war to us. It just seems as if it's just normal, you know. When somebody gets shot, you go, 'Auch, I feel sorry for them.' But, really what you're saying inside is that you're glad that it wasn't one of your family. That's the way people react nowadays. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

This poignant description of how exposure to violence results in the rationing of empathy and the restriction of concern to your own family indicates the young woman's awareness that in other environments perhaps it is possible to have empathy and concern for those beyond your own family. In her community, the frequency of tragedy meant that people operated in survival mode, focusing on their own and their immediate family's survival, and leaving little emotional energy available to devote to the problems of others.

In spite of this, several young people living in similar circumstances were able to imagine an ambitious future for their communities and society. Several aspired to an end to segregation in a new peaceful society, where people could live in mixed communities. Young people living alongside peacelines expressed a desire to have the peacelines removed and sectarian violence ended:

I'd like the gates in Duncairn Gardens to be taken away and all the railings that separate us in the road. My Daddy says when he was young, if there is any Catholic cross to their side of Duncairn Gardens they'd get beat and our ones said that if anybody crossed to our side of Duncairn Gardens they would get beat. So I think that road should just be taken away and then all the streets and houses put into one, and then everybody would just be mates because it would obviously be better if you just had, like, mixed mates because you're not going to be racist or bigoted. (Catholic Female, New Lodge)

5. Consequences and Effects of the Troubles

5.1 Aspirations for the future

Young people interviewed for this study were also asked about their plans and goals for the future. In spite of their pessimism about some aspects of their lives in Northern Ireland, their youthful expectations of the future were frequently enthusiastic and optimistic. They had diverse ambitions in the employment field from teaching to decorating.

Several young people felt that their local communities offered them limited opportunities, especially in terms of employment, and this was frequently given as a reason for wanting to leave the area, or wanting to emigrate:

It's not that I want to get away, it's just that I want to get out and travel and do other things rather than being stuck here and because it's limited round here, it definitely is. It is partly also because the economy is shite it's depressing, you know. Unless you have got like an arm's length of qualifications you're not going to get nowhere round here, so you're better off trying somewhere. I would go away for a couple of years and come back and once I get out for a while to experience this and experience that and try and get a bit of money behind me and try and get a bit of experience, and then come back and see what you can do. (Catholic Female, Eglinton)

Some rural young people believed that they had no choice but to leave their local community if they wanted to get employment and some young people wanted to leave home and indeed Northern Ireland as soon as possible to get away from the Troubles:

I'm leaving home when I'm seventeen. I'm going to try to get a flat in Ballysally where I live, and then as soon as I've got a wife and kids and all, I'm going to just move out of Northern Ireland completely…England is nice, Scotland is nice and Northern Ireland is the one who's the baddest…the most, I suppose, Republican and all. (Protestant Male, Coleraine)

Some planned to move even further a field to escape the conflict:

I'd like to move to Spain where there is no Troubles and get a job there. (Protestant Female, Shankill)

Moving to a safer and more secure country was a further motivation to leave, although some young people were aware that perhaps they ought to stay and try to bring about change:

I want to get out and travel and do other things rather than being stuck here and because it's limited around here. You have to be careful where you go. You can't go to certain areas. If you go to Belfast, you have to be wild careful what parts you go to. If you work in…the Europa hotel, you're scared. You're looking over your shoulder - is this going to be bombed, is that going to go, the jobs aren't that good, the money isn't that good. There's better places you could go, you know. You could go over to England. It's just something about the place. It doesn't encourage you to stay at all and they're trying to change it, but nothing yet. (Catholic Female, Eglinton)

Many young people had siblings or other family members who had already emigrated:

Three of my brothers emigrated. That's what I want to do too. There was a time during the Troubles before when I just wanted to get out of the place altogether. They didn't come back until there was a sort of a peace process, a sort of one, but the one who stayed over there, I remember talking to him on the phone and he said 'it's a completely different place, you know nobody cares who you are or what you did.' There was nothing big. There was no Loyalist marches, there was no sectarianism or anything over there because there's loads of other religions and beliefs over there too, you know it's not just, within Northern Ireland the main religions are Catholic and Protestant, it was just that it was totally different. (Catholic Male, Greysteel)

The discovery that it is possible to live elsewhere without the effect of sectarian division and conflict was sometimes made when young people visited other countries and experienced the lack of stress at first hand.

Some young people just wanted to have a good time, and behave like young people. One young woman's ambitions for travel abroad were simple:

Ibiza. To go clubbing. (Catholic Female, Keady)

Emigration is also a way of potentially starting over again. One young man with a troubled history of several punishment beatings thought that leaving the country might provide him with the opportunity to make a fresh start in re-building his life, which he felt had been damaged by paramilitary beatings:

I just think to myself get up and get away. Get away from Ireland and see what I can do with my life. There are days when it comes into my head all the time. I'm still thinking very strong about it, as to get up and go and see what else is

left of my life, to see and to pick up the pieces, what they destroyed. You know what I mean. Thinking about it and doing it is two different things. Maybe some day I will take the chance and get up and go. (Catholic Male, Derry Londonderry)

However, the challenges of emigration were also apparent to some of the young people. Home-sickness and being apart from a family with whom you have close ties were cited as reasons for being reluctant to emigrate.

In many communities that have been badly affected by the Troubles, familial bonds and community ties are very powerful. Perhaps years of living with the stresses and pressures of the Troubles have contributed to the strength of those ties. Many young people and indeed adults rule out moving from their communities because of the strength of those ties:

I would just miss all my friends and family if I went, like, so I would. (Protestant Young Person, Sunningdale)

In such tight-knit communities, the bonds between people are strong and there is often a vibrancy, a humour and a vitality that fosters a sense of belonging. The humour, the 'craic' would, according to one young woman, keep her coming back to her own community. Some young people, however, could envisage the society without the Troubles, and could see that it would be a place in which they could stay:

I wouldn't go if there was no Troubles or anything like that there. It would be a completely different place, like, if there was no Troubles. (Catholic Male, Greysteel)

The desire to live life without worrying about safety was mentioned frequently as a reason for emigrating or for leaving a particular community. Even young people who lived in areas that had experienced relatively little violence said that the Troubles were the reason they wanted to leave. Some young people, however, could not bring themselves to rely on violence ending, nor could they trust the ceasefires to last:

There's nothing much else happens in Keady. I mean, you're only having Troubles like once a year - but like I mean - there's enough to scare you! And you want to see some of them like after it! And I know I wouldn't stay in Keady! But if the fighting and all stopped, yeah! Definitely! I'd stay in Keady! But, I mean, I won't stay in Keady, because I don't think - to be quite honest- that they would stop. And I don't think I would go out of Ireland now. Well, I

might go out of Ireland - but I think I would definitely get out of Keady! (Catholic Female, Keady)

Young people also aspired to change the nature of their communities and the society in the future. One young person wanted to remain in Northern Ireland and to become involved in cross-community work with young people. Another had a clear idea of the work that needed to be done in order to improve things for young people in his community, so that sectarian violence could be reduced or ended:

The younger people need to be shown that what they're doing is wrong. In our area we have a new community centre being built. We've football pitches and stuff. So, if I was given five million pounds, I'd give it to them to get this place hurried up. You know, to get the developments down there hurried up, so we could take them people away from there where they shouldn't be and put them down here, where they can all be together and play football and all you know, so they wouldn't be causing any hassle for anybody else. (Catholic Male, Greysteel)

Many young people, of both genders and religions, hoped to marry when they were older and some were keen to have children. Many were concerned with the challenge and responsibility of bringing up children in the society where violence and conflict had been part of everyday life for so long. Some were torn between strong bonds with family, and the desire to bring up children in a more peaceful environment:

I don't think I'll ever move out of Armagh. I wouldn't mind moving out of Keady, but not out of Northern Ireland, like. You know what life's like in Northern Ireland. But then again, I don't want my children to grow up in the Troubles and that. (Catholic Female, Keady)

Thus, the worries of the next generation of parents are articulated by this generation's children and young people. Their parents, too, juggled with these tensions. Some emigrated, so that their children would not be exposed to the Troubles. Some stayed, because they could not bear to leave, or because they could not afford to, or because leaving was unthinkable. These young people, we hope, will not leave Northern Ireland in order to escape from exposing another generation to violence. It is encouraging that, in spite of their own exposure, they worry about the impact on their own children in the future.

5.2 Authority, Policing and Intergenerational Relations

Policing and law and order have been central issues in the overall Northern Ireland conflict and in the conflict between the two communities in Northern Ireland. The predominantly Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary was alienated from the Catholic community, an alienation that was most acutely felt in areas worst affected by the Troubles. The police could not go into many of these areas, certainly not without army accompaniment, during the Troubles. In such areas, even after the ceasefires and a substantial reduction in army presence, many local residents continue to be reluctant to refer issues of law and order to the police. Police presence in many Catholic areas is infrequent, and is still likely to attract negative attention from local residents.

Young people, particularly working class young people, in many societies have negative attitudes to the police. These young people often complain of police attitudes, the disproportionate amount of police attention directed at young people and the negative attitudes of adults to the young people. In Northern Ireland, this pattern is further complicated by the political landscape. In general, the attitudes of young people to authority have been formed in the context of a society in which the legitimacy of every authority is or has been questioned, and where many authorities have a bad name with one or both communities. In addition, there is a long-standing antipathy between the Catholic community and the police.

Although there has been a substantial amount of demilitarisation since the ceasefires and the peace process, there remains a heavy police presence in certain communities. Children and young people living along peace-lines or in enclave areas encounter the security forces on a regular basis. Young men in one group interviewed described the security presence in their area, seeing police officers and soldiers, with machine guns, in armoured cars every fifteen minutes and on foot patrol.

The YouthQuest study showed that of the young people from all over Northern Ireland that were surveyed in the spring of 2000 some 9.2% reported being stopped and searched by the security forces 'very often.' A further 14.5% indicated that they were occasionally stopped. (Table 6)

Table 6: Common Experiences of the Troubles (Source Smyth & Scott 2000)

	Very Often %	Occasionally %	Seldom %	Never %	Don't Know %
Straying into an area where I didn't feel safe	13.5	31.5	29.5	21.5	4.2
Getting stopped and searched by security forces	9.2	14.5	18.9	53.5	3.9
Feeling unable to say what I think or being wary in the presence of other people because of safety issues	16.8	30.4	23.1	21.7	8.1
My parents having to take extra safety precautions to secure my home or workplace	7.9	12.9	15.9	55.6	7.8
Having to change my normal routes, routines or habits because of safety	8.1	14.7	16.7	54.6	6.2

Young people in some groups also reported harassment by the police, and young people in three of the groups reported that the police shot plastic bullets at them during riots, aiming above their waists. Overall, all of the groups reported conflicts with the police, but only the groups from Catholic areas reported a regular army presence (and thus encounters with the army) in their areas.

Local communities are divided on the issue of policing of communities, with some advocating paramilitary policing in the absence of an acceptable state police force and others horrified at the brutality of the punishments. This issue will be examined in the next section of this report.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that attitudes among the young people and adults interviewed were on the whole divided along lines of religion, national identity and political allegiance, though to varying degrees. However, negative sentiments towards the police were also expressed in some Protestant working class areas, such as the Shankill area of Belfast. On the other hand, some Catholic young people made positive remarks about the police:

I think the police really do help. (Catholic Female, Keady)

Other young people explained that some police officers had better attitudes than others:

Some police would ask you questions and find out what you think and would be interested, but there's other police who wouldn't even look at you. (Catholic Female, Derry Londonderry)

One young Catholic Male had encountered a small number of 'decent' police officers:

I've seen about two or three policemen who are half decent. All the rest of them, I don't know. (Catholic Male, Derry Londonderry)

One young Catholic woman thought that there were times when the police were needed to perform certain roles:

The police aren't all bad either. There's times you really need them as well. You have to have them there. (Catholic Female, Keady)

A high level of security presence in some areas perhaps explains why so many young people described encounters with the police. It is unclear whether the volume of encounters corresponded to high levels of involvement in crime by those individuals. Certainly, consumption of drugs, underage drinking and smoking were widespread. A minority of interviewees admitted to joy riding, though a significant number of Nationalists in particular seemed to have been involved in violence related to the conflict, particularly those living on interfaces or/and in Catholic areas.

Hanging around on the streets was a common practice among young people in urban areas. Young people in one community described how this led to conflict between young people and adults, and young people and the police on occasions:

Girl:They'd even start giving people around the area abuse, you know, say they're making too much noise. And then the residents would come out and they start giving abuse to them. And then the police would come up, and they would start giving abuse to the police.
Q: What do you think would be good for the young people?
Girl: I think if they got, like, more youth projects and got them involved in them and more, like, youth clubs and all, things for them to do, just to keep them out of trouble…
Boy: Things they're interested in.
Girl: …Then they wouldn't have to resort to like drink and all, 'cause there would be things to do to keep them busy and keep them away from drinks and smoking. (Protestant Young People, Sunningdale)

Boredom and the desire for excitement were cited as motivating young people in other areas to riot:

Because see down the street from me and all, and there is all rioting and I don't like it because you can get hurt in it.
Q: Right, and how often is there rioting?
It's always mostly whenever everybody just feels like fighting.
Q: Right, so just when people are bored?
Aye, they just go down and start fights and whenever they feel like it they just go and riot because they can't be bothered doing nothing else about the place and there should be more stuff for them.
Q: Right, N… what do you think?
Well it's boring because everybody just goes down to fight because there's nothing else to do. (Catholic Males, Ardoyne)

Perceptions of the police and army were generally quite negative among young people, particularly Catholics and Nationalists and that responses to anti-social behaviour were often considered unfair if not brutal. Furthermore, patterns in attitudes and experiences were reflected across different groups, according to factors such as gender location, social class, and religion or political allegiance.

Nationalists, particularly those living in more economically deprived urban areas, were much more likely to have been engaged in clashes with the police and army. Involvement in riots with the security forces was much more common (though not exclusively) among males than females, though many females reported negative encounters of a different nature, particularly verbal exchanges. Most of the young women interviewed in both Nationalist and Unionist communities said that the police were of no help to them, and several reported regular verbal abuse of a sexual nature by the security forces.

The perception among many Nationalist young people of the police and army is of potential assailants rather than protectors. Young people, too, can become assailants of the security forces and some of those interviewed acknowledged that violence or anger on the part of the security forces was sometimes a response to an attack from groups of young people. In some Nationalist areas, army land rovers were often considered fair targets for paint bombs, glass bottles, bricks and other missiles. However, when the police retaliate in kind to attacks and taunts by young people, their authority is further undermined in the eyes of the young people.

Sometimes, the mere presence of the police in areas was enough to instigate trouble:

I think if the police weren't there nothing would happen but like at the same time it might, I'm just saying that the police made everyone more angry by being there. (Catholic Female, Keady)

Some young people, particularly males, seemed to find clashes with the police a source of excitement, activity and entertainment:

As soon as some of them sees a land-rover coming up, they'll either whistle down or shout down and then all the lads get the road blocks and all ready. (Protestant Male, Coleraine)

Some of these encounters seemed to have a game-like quality in the eyes of the young people. There also seemed to be implicit rules of engagement, and limits to what kind of attack young people would mount, as is apparent in this account, when the young people broke the rules, and went 'a bit too far':

See Halloween night past there? Police and everything were out and they had to arrest two youngsters. They went a bit too far that night. They started making their own petrol bombs and firing them on the roads and firing bricks at the police cars The police came in. And they even went more mad because they just don't like them big Saracens, because they're like Protestants. I'm not blaming the police but at the same time they bring trouble. [And they are] a good chase. (Catholic Female, Keady)

The excitement of a 'good chase' provides some of the incentive for young people to continue with these battles. Some young people acknowledged that police - and army - behaviour was often in response to their own provocation of the police:

See before the Twelfth came up? Me and other boys was painting all the kerbs and all. And every time a land rover came up, we've all whistled and ran away with the paint and all. And one time my brother got caught. And they just got out and grabbed the paint off him and pushed him straight into a lamp post, and he hurt his back. And I ran and lifted a brick and threw it and broke the blue glass. And they chased me and all but I ran into the house. And they tried to put the door through. (Protestant Male, Coleraine)

However, young people observed that the police sometimes 'went a bit too far' and that the level of force sometimes used by the police was often considered excessive:

One night we watched the police flashing the lights at these boys and then the boys started throwing stones at them then, the police were narking them. And then whenever this boy threw a stone at them, they just got the youngest one out of them and battered him and put him in the back of the land-rover. (Catholic Male, Derry Londonderry)

Many young Catholic Nationalists and some young Protestants complained that they had been wrongfully arrested. They also had seen others, family members and friends, being arrested. In this case, they said that the police had also assaulted the young man:

I can remember the night they arrested your brother… And that was over nothin' because we were standing at a corner. And he turned around, and the police grabbed her and pulled her out of the road. Told her, 'You can't stand here! You can't stand here!'…and says, 'Look, please let go of my sister.' And murder started! And he got arrested for it. And they beat him up. And we seen them beating him up and pulling him into the car.
(Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

A number of interviewees, mostly male and Catholic, felt they had been identified as trouble-makers by the police and/or army, and singled out by them for particular surveillance and constant attention. In this case, this was in the context of a young person's previous involvement in crime, but the young man felt there were strong sectarian undertones:

The police do have a pick on you, like, once they know your name and what you are. They're out to get you, I think anyway. I can't even go, when I do make friends and I'm walking with them, they pull up and search me in front of all my friends. And my friends are saying, like, 'What have you done?' and I'm, like, 'Nothing!' And then the next minute, their Ma and Das turn round and say to them, 'Don't go round with that boy!' My mates have had jobs, and the

police have went in - the community police have went in and said, [to the employer] 'Why are you giving them boys jobs for?'… The police say, 'Well, he's never out of jail!' You know what I mean? Is it any wonder why people get in trouble! And the police are very, very bitter, very bitter, they don't like Catholics at all, that is a true fact. They slap you and kick you round the cells and all. (Catholic Male, Coleraine)

Another young man attributed his negative experience of the police to his involvement in Republican politics, even though he had no involvement in any paramilitary group.

A considerable number of young people thought that the security forces treated them as they did because they were young people, and because the young people would be scared to challenge their treatment at the hands of the security forces. This sense that young people reported of being treated with disrespect by the security forces, and not having any method of redress when they were unfairly treated replicates other earlier studies, where young people from both communities reported negative experiences with the security forces (McVeigh, 1994).

The lack of accountability of the police, and the sense that young people had of police impunity was a significant source of anger and frustration, particularly amongst young Catholics. One interviewee thought that he had no come-back against the police, and that he had no effective method of complaining about their behaviour. This strong sense of injustice and the powerlessness to challenge unfair treatment was a recurring theme in interviews:

You can't beat the police, you can't beat the police, nobody can beat the police, the only way to beat the police is to put one in their head, you can't beat them like in court or nowhere because they have too big a say, know what I mean, because they're serving the Queen and all that there, you just can't beat them. (Catholic Male, Coleraine)

The perceived injustice of the situation with policing in some areas generated anger and defiance on the part of the young people living there. This defiance was particularly marked among a small number of male interviewees, all of whom had been engaged in anti-social activity at one time or another. Two of these interviewees were in training school as a result of offences they had committed. One interviewee, who openly acknowledged his involvement in joy riding, described how his reputation had led to him being blamed by both police and local paramilitaries for other crimes that he had played no part in. Other

young offenders complained that they were subject to double policing - by both police and paramilitaries, who did not 'coordinate' their responses, so young people must, on occasions, negotiate two penal systems simultaneously in relation to one offence.

Generational conflict

The level of violence due to the Troubles has varied considerably since 1969. The worst period of most intense conflict was in the early 1970s; 496 people died in 1972 alone. Experience of the Troubles builds up over time, so older generations have memories of that period of intense conflict, and a large store of experiences that younger people in Northern Ireland do not have. Therefore, an individual's perception is determined - at least in part - by age. Only those in their fifties and older have any memory of living in relative peace. The differing perceptions between generations, alongside other age differences, affects the relationship between the older and younger generations. Older adults and younger people are likely to have radically different conceptual maps of the Troubles, and correspondingly different levels of accumulated experience of violence. One youth worker described how, in her view, adults' views inevitably prevail, leaving little space for young people in local communities:

…because of the conflict young people aren't being given attention at home or on the street, nobody wants to listen to them, nobody wants to give them a voice and ask them what they want or how they feel about everything. It's all based around adults and how adults feel now, and now the prisoners are being released, how do the adults feel? And the need to get them back into the community - where young people have never really been given a place in the community, ever. (Catholic Female Youth Worker, Belfast)

Tension between young people and adults is a frequent feature of Western developed societies in which adolescence is considered to exist as a particular phase of late childhood or pre-adulthood. Young people were conscious of these tensions in their communities in Northern Ireland:

Q: What's it like with the adults, between the young people and the adults in the community?
1: Some of them just hate you for what you are.
2: Aye. There's nothing you can do about that.
3: They don't even give you a chance. (Catholic Females, Ardoyne)

Male adolescents in particular are perceived by many adults, especially older adults, primarily as a potential threat. In housing estates, young people are often not welcome to gather on what communal space there is, and when they do, are often suspected (and feared) by adults and older people as perpetrators of vandalism or worse. The alienation of young people in certain communities is fairly comprehensive. Furthermore, these suspicions are not limited to their neighbours within their own community. Similar features of their status in the wider society often throws them back onto their own community as their sole arena for entertainment, achievement or fulfilment. In communities involved in the research reported here and elsewhere (Smyth, et al., 2001; Smyth and Scott, 2000) young people reported feeling marginalised within their own communities, subjects of constant community and police surveillance, scape-goated and feared and mistrusted by adults in the community.

The limits of family influence on adolescents

Recent social policy has tended to look to the family as the main conveyer of socialisation and values. Some young people described how they thought their family had influenced their attitudes and behaviour:

…my Mummy told me… 'Do you see when you grow up? You'll be a Protestant and there will be Catholics that'll try and fight with you.' (Protestant Male, Coleraine)

Other young people described how they saw their parents advice as related to their safety, rather than as an attempt to stop them mixing across the sectarian divide:

And our parents like are just trying to advise on, stay with the right people. Don't be going into the wrong cliques and them things like that. (Catholic Female, Ardoyne)

One young man with a history of truanting and petty criminal offences described his family's vain attempts to influence his behaviour:

…you know school on a Friday, you know everyone getting together from school drinking and all, hanging out and the next minute come third or fourth year you're missing days off school and you're just gradually getting worser and worser, and you just end up not going to school, you know what I mean? And that starts rows in the family and then you just go mad in the family and it's just mad.
Q: And would you say your relationship with your family changed then when you began to get into trouble or had it changed when you were in school?

Aye, school, when I was at school my Ma was always eating the head off me you know, when I was getting into trouble and I don't think my Ma was taking my side of the story, she was telling the teachers my side of the story right, but she was saying to me that I was stupid and I'd never wise up, just constantly at me all the time, know what I mean? And I just cracked.
Q: Do you think she listened?
No I don't think my Ma listens to what I have to say (Catholic Male, Coleraine)

From what we have observed in this study, peer groups, the community context and the wider socio-political and economic environment are also very powerful influences on young people's behaviour. The influence of these factors is perhaps stronger than the influence of the family, particularly as children grow older. This separation tends to compound rather than heal intergenerational conflict.

Alienation
From the young people's perspective, young people reported alienation from adult members of the community (Smyth et al., 2002). Some young people said that they 'could only trust their close family and friends' and others said they were not able to trust anyone in the community. Some young people interviewed explained how adults perceive young people as the 'problem': young people, in turn, perceive adults as being 'complainers'. The young people saw some of the adult complaints as a product of adults' lives (or lack of lives) in the community. Some of the adults' complaints they saw as unjustified, a result of adults having nothing better to do than complain. Some young people related this to what they perceived as the hypocrisy of adults in the community. The young people felt that although adults could acceptably consume alcohol and drugs, these same adults expressed disapproval at young people for following their example. Some young people felt a strong sense of injustice as a result, that they were punished and castigated for behaviour that was prevalent in the community.

Authority
Young people in Northern Ireland who witness from an early age the undermining of their parents' authority by those with greater authority, such as the security forces or paramilitary groups, grow up with an understanding of authority that is indelibly linked to power and militarism. Notions of respect, too, are difficult to explain to young people in a societal context where disorder, violence and threat are commonplace. One of the effects of over thirty years of violence is that new collective understandings of authority and respect for authority will

have to be built. In the interim, until this is done, young people will continue to struggle with these issues.

5.3 Paramilitaries and young people

Paramilitary organisations exist on both sides of the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland. The level of paramilitary activity and its impact on community life has varied over the period of the Troubles. In the earlier phases of the Troubles, high levels of violent paramilitary activity among both Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries were associated with high incidence of imprisonment of those involved in such activity, particularly on the Republican side, although Loyalists, too were imprisoned. Since the first ceasefires in 1994, and with the advent of the Belfast Agreement, the nature of paramilitary activity has changed in both Loyalist and Republican areas. Within Loyalist communities, there have been violent contests between the two main Loyalist groupings, the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association. This has resulted in the displacement of several hundred families, mostly in the Shankill area, and the deaths of several Loyalist leaders. On the Republican side, tensions between dissident anti-agreement Republican groups and the IRA have been less significant.

The early release of political prisoners as part of the Good Friday Agreement forced the issue of the role of paramilitary members in the new arrangements in Northern Ireland. In both communities to a greater or lesser extent, paramilitary group members have had to become involved in activities, in line with the new political dispensation. Numbers of ex-prisoners and ex-combatants have become involved in community development work.

The relationship between young people and paramilitaries in Northern Ireland is a complex one. Paramilitary leaders and members are often the fathers, uncles or older brothers of young people. Paramilitary leaders can appear glamorous and 'cool;' they attain the status of local heroes and role models in the eyes of some young people anxious for respect and status in their community.

While all the young people interviewed had some knowledge of paramilitary groups, the level of contact varied extensively between areas, and individuals. Those living in deprived urban areas were most likely to report frequent, even daily, contact with local paramilitaries, though there were some exceptions. Generally, a strong paramilitary presence was evident in the areas most associated with high levels of Troubles-

related violence. Yet some young people resented paramilitary groups in their communities, and saw no useful role for them:

I don't like paramilitaries, I just hate them…I think they're protecting old people in communities, and people getting burgled and that there and they don't like that there but I think they go a bit too far at times, going round drug dealers and taking money off them and slabbering they'll do this and do that, I mean carrying out threats, it's stupid you know. (Protestant Male, Craigavon)

In beleaguered communities where sectarian attack is a real threat, paramilitaries are often considered the defenders of their community. Young people in an isolated Catholic community affirmed their view that paramilitary defence of their area was needed:

Boy: You do need paramilitaries in places. (Name of area) is lonely [isolated].
Boy: If anything happened we're fucked.
Boy: We need a couple of guns or something.
Girl: We're surrounded by about eight Protestant areas. (Catholic Young People, Derry Londonderry)

Young people in urban areas also saw paramilitary groups as defenders of their community:

See the way you were saying the IRA do bad things right? But there was a time whenever they do good things to protect their people. Because you see, like, if the UVF or something would come into our area you know, to try and kill people, then they'd protect you. (Catholic Male, New Lodge)

In the law-and-order vacuum that has arisen as a result of the lack of trust in the police force, paramilitaries have been called on to 'police' their local communities. In Republican areas, significant numbers of Republican activists, including some ex-prisoners, have engaged in community restorative justice work, in an effort to systematise responses to anti-social behaviour within communities, and to provide non-violent methods of addressing petty crime and vandalism. There is a network of community restorative justice schemes in Republican areas throughout Northern Ireland, and these would be perceived to be mainstream Republican. A separate study of young people's views of one of the schemes in a Republican community was conducted in 2001 (Smyth et al., 2002).

There is one community restorative justice scheme (with plans for expansion) on the Loyalist side. This scheme is perceived to be associated with the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Volunteer Force.

However, this scheme operates in the context of Loyalist communities that are divided in loyalty between the Ulster Volunteer Force, and the Ulster Defence Association.

Community restorative justice schemes have arisen in both Loyalist and Republican areas in the context of controversy over the use of punishment attacks by both Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries. These attacks, which were directed against petty criminals and those involved in anti-social behaviour in local communities, were often brutal, and involved beatings, knee-cappings and broken limbs. On at least one occasion, death has occurred following such attacks. A proportion of local residents in both Loyalist and Republican communities support the use of these brutal methods, and those close to the paramilitary groups report that paramilitaries are pressed by local people to carry out such attacks, in order to provide deterrents within the local community. However, there is not unanimity about these attacks, and others within the community abhor the brutality of them.

In interview, many young people expressed their resentment at the 'policing role' of paramilitaries in their local communities. The employment of often brutal methods or threats of violent punishment as a means of 'policing' local communities was generally felt to be excessive, often far outweighing the seriousness of the crime:

They don't have the right to do half of the things that they do, I know they're trying to help make a point like but they're not helping, they're making it worse. But like they have no need to kill people and harm people and destroy so many lives. Yeah like they are bad but at the same time the rest of the groups are just as bad. We need them, I feel like we need them to be there to stick up for the Catholics but, at the same time, they shouldn't go about killing people for no reason. (Catholic Female, Keady)

Many young people interviewed living in these communities felt harassed by local paramilitaries, and resented being asked to move on from street corners where they would stand chatting to their friends. Some young people reported curfews in their areas, enforced by vigilantes (i.e. local people who perceive their role as policing the community, but without necessarily being involved in paramilitary organisations). These curfews occur in the context of street violence and can be imposed in an attempt to curb so-called 'recreational rioting.' Some young people showed considerable bravado – or lack of consideration for their own safety - in confronting their local paramilitaries:

It's not as if we're afraid of them but they're not gentle about it because there's a wee boy that we know that was on curfew, and he had to be in at six o'clock and we were down the park and he wasn't up home and they came down looking for him, and they grabbed him by the back of the jumper and trailed him, and he wouldn't walk and they were pushing him and trying to get him to walk and he still wouldn't walk, and then they grabbed him, one of them grabbed him by the ear and the jumper and everything, remember? (Catholic Young Person, New Lodge)

Young people, however, felt that they were treated as potential trouble-makers, and their presence on their own streets was not tolerated. Some young people also felt that the adults in their communities conspired against young people. Quite a few young people reported having no place to go in their own areas, being moved on constantly, and being the subject of adult complaints for simply being out of doors:

Because the Provos never leave you alone, if you're just standing at the corner they come in and complain, they say that people are complaining about you even though nobody said nothing, and they're always, it's like it never used to be us that they shouted at. But now it's like they're always constantly round us. (Catholic Male, New Lodge)

For some young people, the situation was much more serious. Some young people interviewed had experience of paramilitary action (either verbal or physical) as a result of their involvement in anti-social behaviour, such as the consumption of drugs and alcohol, joy riding or rioting. In all, three interviewees said that they had been victims of at least one punishment attack, as a result of their persistent re-offending:

You just get pulled out, you're just walking home and a car just pulls up beside you and you just listen to them and then they drive off …I've been thrown over a wall, a big wall in Portrush outside Traks, thrown over a big massive wall and near killed myself, so they did. I have a couple of scars on my back just, I was mostly grazed you know, by falling down the wall, I was winded, I thought I was dying because I was that much winded I couldn't breathe you know, I just thought I was dying. (Catholic Male, Coleraine)

One had been a victim of such attacks on numerous occasions:

Well I've had 13 punishment beatings. By paramilitaries. Iron bars, sledgehammers, hurley bats, made you lie on streets, made you lie on a fence, made you run and hide. My own just stick it out, I couldn't come near any of

my family's houses because paramilitaries told them that if they got me in the house they would break the house and do me in and the people beside me…it happened since I was 13 up to right up to 17…I got 35 stitches in my leg. My wrist, I was bandaged from my ankles right up to here, my elbow was broke, my wrist was broke, I'd fractured kneecaps, swollen kneecaps, my ankles were broke and I'd slices all over my arms and legs and my head. (Catholic Male, Derry Londonderry)

Whilst this young man's experience was exceptional, other interviewees had known people who had been victims of punishment beatings. Family members had been victims of punishment attacks in a small number of cases. One person said that she had witnessed a punishment shooting in her community as a very young child. In retrospect, she was critical of the willingness of the paramilitaries to expose a child of her age to such sights:

See when I was about four or five, in the New Lodge? There used to be like the grey gables. Well there is an entry in the middle of it. And I seen somebody getting his knees shot. And they just came walking down the entry. They had just said, 'You were warned!' and then they shot him. And they saw me standing there, like. What's the use of doing it in front of a child? (Catholic Female, New Lodge)

For the most part, young people thought that the brutality of such attacks outweighed the seriousness of the crime they were meant to punish. This, in the view of the young people, further undermined the legitimacy of the paramilitaries' authority. The other factor that undermined their authority was the previous involvement of some of the paramilitaries in anti-social behaviour:

I'd say a lot of young people's faith in our area has went down because of punishment beatings and a lot of paramilitaries that would be in our area are ex hoods and would have stolen cars themselves and would have been top hoods in Turf Lodge and in Ballymurphy. (Catholic Female, New Lodge)

The credibility of paramilitaries as 'community policemen' when they themselves had been rioters, or had been involved in illegal activities in the past was an issue for many of the young people. Two youth workers confirmed this:

1: A lot of young people don't take them seriously and would say, 'Well, are you going to kneecap me for something you would have done five years ago yourself. Who do you think you are?'

2: Because of the punishment beatings, young people are going, 'I mean, I'm being beaten for standing on a street corner here. What's the craic here?' So a lot of their faith in paramilitaries isn't there anymore. Although, in saying that now, they would hate the Brits with a passion, so there would be faith in the paramilitaries in that way. In that respect they're sort of trying to get the Brits out, but when it comes to community issues, there's no faith in them at all. (Catholic Females, Youth Workers, Belfast)

All three of the young people interviewed who had experienced punishment beatings were male, under the age of eighteen when they had been beaten, and Catholic. This creates the impression that punishment attacks are limited to or more common in Republican areas. However, police statistics on punishment attacks indicate that the proportion of punishment attacks carried out by Loyalists is, in fact, substantially higher than the corresponding figures for Republicans.

Tables 7 and 8 show a breakdown by Loyalist and Republican of punishment beatings and shootings from 1988 onwards. Both Loyalist and Republican beatings reached a peak in 1996. After 1996 there was a subsequent decline but Loyalists carried out more attacks, nearly twice as many beatings as Republicans. This increase is possibly related to feuding within Loyalism that occurred during this period. Paramilitary shootings were also higher among Loyalists with 475 shootings between 1995 and 2002 compared to 264 Republican shootings.

There is a common impression that the majority of victims of punishment attacks are young people. However police statistics would suggest otherwise (see Figure 1). Kennedy (2001) also found that most victims of punishment shootings were men in their twenties, accounting for over half of all victims both within Loyalist and Republican communities. Police statistics for punishment beatings would indicate that 219 of the 919 (24%) Loyalist punishment beatings were on under 20s and 277 of the 873 (32%) Republican punishment beatings were on the same age group. For shootings 192 of the 874 (22%) Loyalist shootings were on under 20s and 196 of the 614 (32%) Republican shootings.

One young person reported that sixteen was the minimum age at which punishment attacks took place. Yet a Catholic male interviewee from Derry Londonderry reported that he had been beaten for the first time at the age of thirteen.

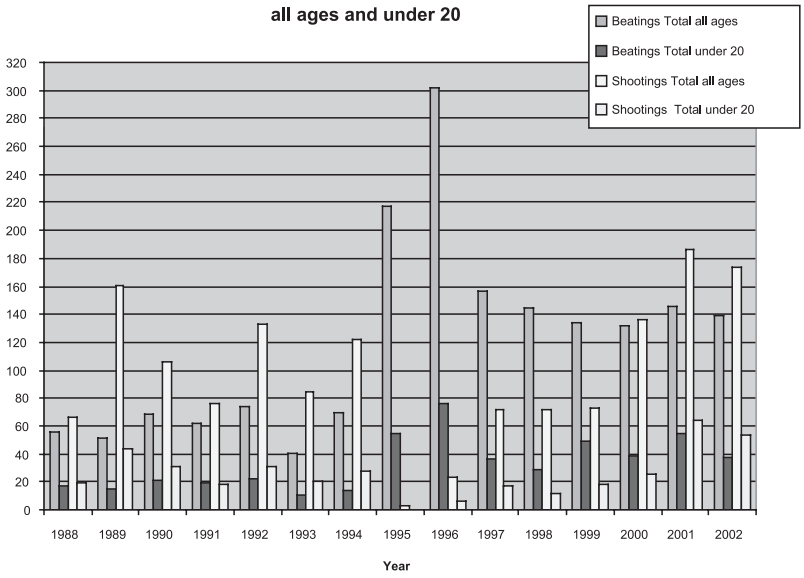
Table 7: Casualties of Paramilitary Attacks: assaults

Year	Loyalist		Republican		Total	Total
	all ages	under 20	all ages	under 20	all ages	under 20
1988	21	8	35	9	56	17
1989	23	5	28	10	51	15
1990	21	2	47	19	68	21
1991	22	6	40	13	62	19
1992	36	8	38	15	74	23
1993	35	9	6	2	41	11
1994	38	7	32	7	70	14
1995	76	16	141	39	217	55
1996	130	25	172	51	302	76
1997	78	18	78	18	156	36
1998	89	15	55	14	144	29
1999	90	30	44	19	134	49
2000	78	23	54	16	132	39
2001	93	29	53	26	146	55
2002	89	18	50	19	139	37
Total	919	219	873	277	1792	496

Table 8: Casualties of Paramilitary Attacks: Shootings

Year	Loyalist		Republican		Total	Total
	all ages	under 20	all ages	under 20	all ages	under 20
1988	34	5	32	14	66	19
1989	65	12	96	32	161	44
1990	60	13	46	18	106	31
1991	40	8	36	10	76	18
1992	72	11	61	20	133	31
1993	60	13	25	7	85	20
1994	68	13	54	15	122	28
1995	3				3	
1996	21	6	3		24	6
1997	46	10	26	7	72	17
1998	34	3	38	9	72	12
1999	47	12	26	6	73	18
2000	86	15	50	11	136	26
2001	121	36	65	28	186	64
2002	117	35	56	19	173	54
Total	874	192	614	196	1488	388

Figure 1 Paramilitary beatings and shootings 1988-2002 all ages and under 20



Punishment beatings do not involve the use of firearms and are less likely to be regarded as breaches of paramilitary ceasefires. Punishment shootings, however, have led various politicians to publicly question the status of various organisations' ceasefires. This provides a political disincentive to paramilitary groups, who are pro-agreement, since a group's involvement in such shootings could prove politically hazardous for them. Thus, there was an almost complete cessation of punishment shootings in the period following the 1994 ceasefires. Subsequently, however, both Loyalist and Republican groups returned to using them.

As with the beatings, some of the Loyalist shootings are probably related to the feuds within Loyalism that occurred during that period. Others are related to what could be referred to as the 'policing deficit' in certain communities. The remainder are explained by the policing of so-called anti-social behaviour within Loyalist and Republican communities and the role of paramilitaries in delivering summary justice to those within these communities. Sinn Féin and Progressive Unionist representatives have found that unfortunately a proportion of their electorate consider

violence to be a legitimate and effective method of solving such problems. They report that they come under pressure from their constituents to advocate the use of violent methods of punishing anti-social behaviour. In spite of the public outcry against these brutal methods of punishment, there continues to be an appetite for violent punishment within some communities. This was confirmed by the observations of the research team.

Some of those who had been subject to punishment attacks complained that, once they had been punished for engaging in anti-social behaviour, they were labelled as trouble-makers. This meant that they were blamed for any problems that arose locally, even if they had no involvement in them:

…they were more or less putting me out as a ringleader of everything of all the - what they call 'hoods'- and they say I was the ringleader of all the hoods so they are all looking up to me, so they are going to follow suit. And that wasn't fair …they stuck a label on my back. 'Every time you see him just beat him!' That was more or less the way they were putting it. (Catholic Male, Derry Londonderry)

In spite of the façade of defiance and bravado, some of these victims of punishment attacks were constantly afraid of repeat attacks, and one young man took to carrying weapons for self defence:

There is times when I go up the town and that there, I always look round me and all. And at night time when I'm on my own, I always look round me so I do. I always look round to me to see if the boys that have threatened me are coming through my area, because they would always - if they have drink in them or something - they would always go for you. But I always carry protection with me. I carry a knife with me anyway, because I've just been threatened that many times by paramilitaries. (Catholic Male, Craigavon)

Other young people described how they were constantly vigilant, especially within their own community. Such vigilance is a rational response to a real threat. However, hyper-vigilance can also be a symptom of psychological traumatisation. Some young people reported other symptoms such as sleeping problems and flashbacks:

I can't go out anymore because the fear never leaves you. I'll always get nightmares. I still get nightmares to this day. And I waken up, and I waken the whole house with the roaring you do. Because when you sleep, everything just flashed back in front of you. (Catholic Male, Derry Londonderry)

Predictably, the attitudes of these young people towards paramilitary groups were very negative. They complained that those who set themselves up to punish their behaviour were, themselves, lawless, haphazard, hypocritical and not accountable to anyone. Frustration and anger at the impunity with which paramilitary groups seemed to operate was shared by other young people. Complaints were made that paramilitaries did not apply those same standards that they applied to others to themselves and their families. One victim of multiple punishment attacks pointed out that this rendered their 'policing' role hypocritical and lacking in face validity:

They are definitely scumbags. They are bringing up families of their own, but see whenever their sons or daughters or whatever get into trouble because they are in the IRA they'll get nothing done to them. They'll get away with murder. They'll not be classed as hoods. They'll just turn round and say 'my son has just gone off the rails for a wee while, I'll put him back right'. (Catholic Male, Derry Londonderry)

A more widespread resentment from other young people who were not subject to punishment attacks was also apparent. Some of this resentment seemed to be directed at the power and authority they wield in the community. However, not all young people had negative attitudes to paramilitary groups and in some communities, sections of young people identified with one or other of the local paramilitaries. All the young people interviewed were aware and knowledgeable about their local paramilitaries, and some had contact with paramilitaries in their areas. However, only one young person admitted to having joined a paramilitary organisation. Young people living in areas with a strong paramilitary presence reported knowing about paramilitary activity, or knowing someone who was or had been a member, and in some cases these were members of the young person's family.

Young people reported that recruitment of young people into paramilitary groups was ongoing in some areas, though there was wide variation between areas. In one nationalist community, one young woman said that no-one was recruited at a very young age, and it was usually older males, rather than females, who were recruited. However, paramilitaries started asking young men to join around the age of fifteen. Another young person in another community cited sixteen as the minimum age in his experience. Elsewhere, we were informed that recruitment into the IRA is from the age of 16. The Ulster Young Militants (UYM) in a written statement produced in 2002 stated that they did not recruit young people under the age of 16. Recruitment into the UDA and

the UFF is based on recruitment into UYM. The age limit for recruitment into the UVF was unclear. The Optional Protocols at the United Nations call for the ending of recruitment into any army under the age of 18 years. One young man in Craigavon thought that it was the vulnerability of the young that made them easy to recruit, and the paramilitaries relied on young people's youthful ignorance of the full consequences of joining:

If it wasn't easy to recruit young people, paramilitaries would have been done out years ago. They would have been away years ago, a couple of years ago. They'd see, 'Look we have no volunteers!' Know what I mean? Oh aye, they get them everywhere, young boys just sixteen and left school thinking it's a good thing, that they're safe and all, saying 'aye right come on ahead.' You ask any - I bet you - any IRA man or UDA in their forties, would turn round and say, 'Don't join it because you're just wasting your life!' Know what I mean? (Catholic Male, Craigavon)

Although only one person admitted to having been a member of a paramilitary organisation, opinion was divided amongst others about whether or not they would join a paramilitary group. Many of these young people had witnessed at first hand the implications of paramilitary membership and the 'career path' that lay ahead of paramilitary members. They also witnessed the impact on the members' families. One young woman thought that the decision to join a paramilitary group should be seen in the context of the impact on their families:

I think it's selfish to join the Provos or the IRA because you're putting your kids and your family in danger too because if somebody is after you, you're putting your family in danger because if somebody goes to shoot you like, they could shoot, they could injure any of your family, so I think it's selfish. (Catholic Female, New Lodge)

The interview data collected for this study illustrated how some young people had lost respect for the paramilitaries. This seemed to be a trend that emerged since the cease-fires. The loss of respect was attributed to one of two main factors: first was the paramilitaries' continued violence in the form of punishment attacks:

They are still doing their punishment beatings. So I can't see how that is a ceasefire. A ceasefire is everything called off, not just bombings and shootings. But sure even when they called a ceasefire they were still carrying out kneecappings and punishment beatings…see when the ceasefires were called

they were more harder and did more damage. (Catholic Male, Derry Londonderry)

The ceasefires were clearly associated in the minds of several young people with the issue of punishment attacks.

The second reason for the loss of respect for paramilitaries was because they were perceived to have 'sold out' through political compromise. One young woman was familiar with adults' views on this subject:

My Daddy says the IRA used to be good, he says they used to be good and everybody used to support them and all. And my Daddy says he used to go out and stand and talk to all his mates that were in it and help them. But he never actually went out to do jobs with them, he just like helped them get stuff. And then, but he says now they're just like - everybody pities them because they're just bores and they think they're brilliant. But the INLA are like – the things they do for kids, because everybody was in the INLA, and all… (Catholic Female, New Lodge)

The tension and competition between rival groups in the community, particularly where there is a pro and anti-agreement difference between the groups, is manifest in Republican areas, albeit to a lesser extent than in Loyalist areas. The INLA have no stated position on the agreement, but are on ceasefire, whereas the IRA are pro-agreement and supportive of the peace process. Perhaps as a result, one young man thought the IRA were 'played out.' One adult interviewee reported a change in her attitude to paramilitary groups over time, and her cynicism at motivation of these groups:

I would say my attitude has changed an awful lot as far as the IRA, politics, UVF, UDA. I mean I honestly don't think, some people say right there is a difference because one group is fighting a war and the other group aren't, the other group are just fighting to hang on to the power that they've got. And I don't know. I think between the whole lot of them they haven't done anything for anybody, only left us all in pieces. You know? (Catholic Female, Belfast)

The test for the future will be whether the pieces can be put back together.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Methodological issues

We embarked on this study at a particular time in the Northern Ireland peace process, when there had been little open-ended research conducted on children and young people's experiences of the Troubles and the effects on them. Previous studies had often used questionnaires, whereas we aimed to let young people talk in a semi-structured way, raising what they considered to be important, rather than imposing a pre-set list of concerns on the study. Some of the issues raised by respondents were unexpected, and some of their accounts were surprising, occasionally shocking and often moving. The additional time and effort involved in a more open-ended approach to documenting children and young people's experiences was justified by the diversity and complexity of the findings, in our view.

This study was the first time that we had attempted to conduct a substantial study on the views and experiences of children and young people in Northern Ireland. Previous projects had examined sensitive areas, where access to the researched population was not easily negotiated. On this study, we encountered the routine additional tasks associated with gaining access to children and young people for research purposes. All of the research team had to undergo police checks and we had to seek parental consent for all participants under the age of eighteen. In order to ensure a good spread of data, which meant that the quota interviewed had to be from a good geographical, age, religious and gender spread, we had to seek the cooperation of many adults, who are the gatekeepers in most instances to young people in communities, voluntary organisations and families in Northern Ireland. For the most part, when we had explained the purpose of our work, and presented our credentials, we met with cooperation, and most of the adults we approached allowed us to ask the young people in their charge if they were interested in participating in the study. In the majority of cases they were.

However, we encountered another reaction as well. In some cases, the adults we approached were reluctant or unwilling to cooperate, or unwilling to ask if the young people concerned were interested in participating. These adult gatekeepers cited some of the reasons for hesitance or their unwillingness to cooperate. They said that the young people would find the study boring, they said that they were over-researched and fed up with being researched. These were legitimate

concerns, and one group of young people we approached did indeed say that they would not be interested in participating. However, in other cases, the young people were not asked, and access was refused by the adults, making decisions on behalf of young people. The research team began to wonder about this pattern of response from adults after we were told by one adult, 'These are our young people, go get your own young people.'

The adults we were approaching were often working closely with the young people, and had invested large amounts of time and energy into youth work. Often, too, these adults were living in embattled communities, marked by sectarian, sectoral and internecine division. Often too, there was competition between organisations in the voluntary sector for funding and recognition of their work.

The research team began to wonder about the issue of territoriality, not in relation to the sectarian geography of Northern Ireland but rather in relation to territorial claims over certain young people. The team wondered whether the adults worried that children and young people would 'spill the beans', say things that would betray the interests of the adults or of the community. In the end, it seemed as if the threat was not so much related to what the researchers uncovered in the study, or what the young people said, but rather about the relationship between the young people and the 'outsider' researcher. The research team formed the impression that for some communities, and for some adult youth leaders, it was threatening to have young people forming relationships with outside adults, who would listen attentively to what those young people had to say. This is perhaps a product of the tight-knit nature of some of the communities from which the young people were selected. It is also perhaps related to the form of generational politics that has developed in many communities across Northern Ireland, where marked differences in perspectives between the generations can be observed.

6.2 Findings

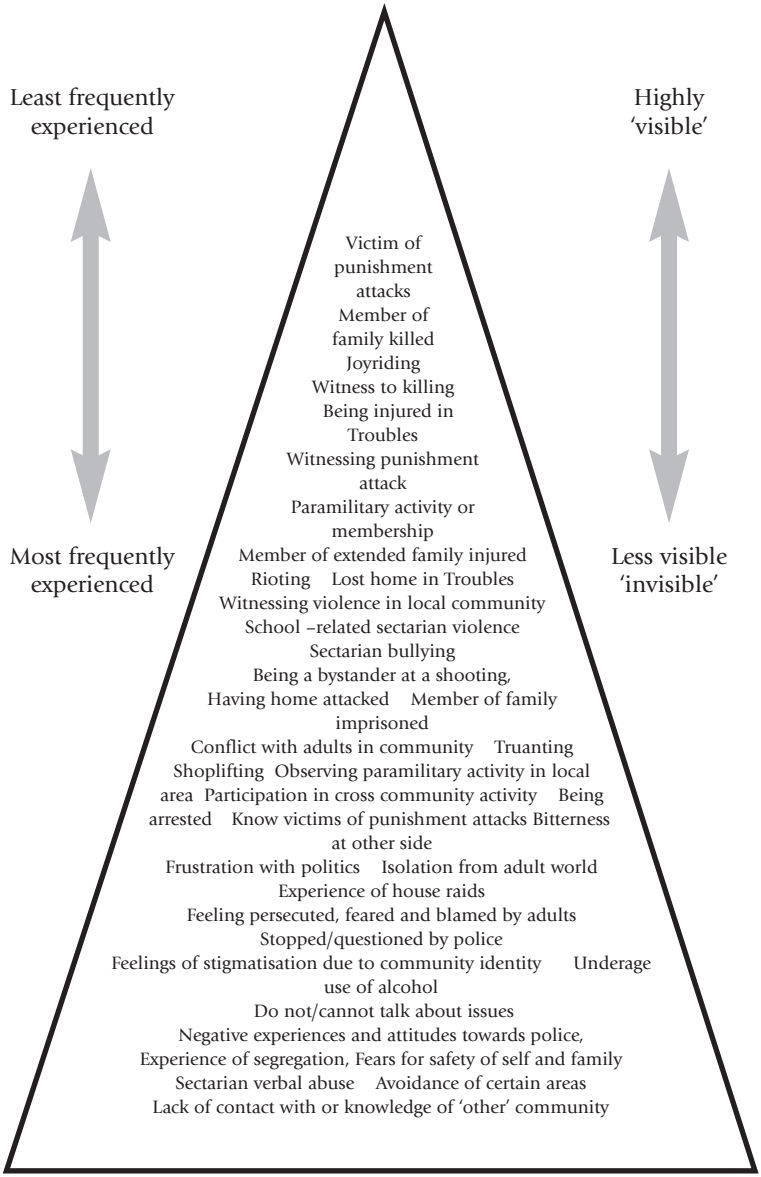
Since the interviewees were selected from areas and sub-populations that had been relatively more exposed to events in the Troubles than average, it is not possible to generalise from the findings here to the total population of young people in Northern Ireland, nor is it possible to arrive at a notion of an 'average' level of exposure as a result of this study. However, other studies, such as the YouthQuest study address this issue. What is possible from the findings here is to arrive at a notion of the frequency with which young people in areas and sub-populations are exposed to various Troubles-related events, and how frequently they

report certain effects of the Troubles. Certain experiences, such as being the victim of a punishment attack are relatively rare, whilst others, such as being stopped by the police or experiencing sectarian violence or abuse are relatively common.

Yet this is perhaps not the general impression of young people's lives in conflicted and embattled communities. Some of these rare experiences, such as being the victim of a punishment attack or joyriding, are highly publicised and visible to the wider society, whilst the more common experiences, such as being stopped and questioned by the police, or being attacked on the way home from school, are comparatively ignored. This makes for a rather distorted notion of how young people overall have experienced the Northern Ireland conflict.

Figure 2 shows in diagrammatic form young people's experience of the conflict, and the 'iceberg effect' that seems to occur, with a great deal of public interest and concern directed at the relatively uncommon experiences of children and young people, whilst the more prevalent experiences are ignored, normalised and taken for granted.

Figure 2: Experiences of the Troubles and conflict.

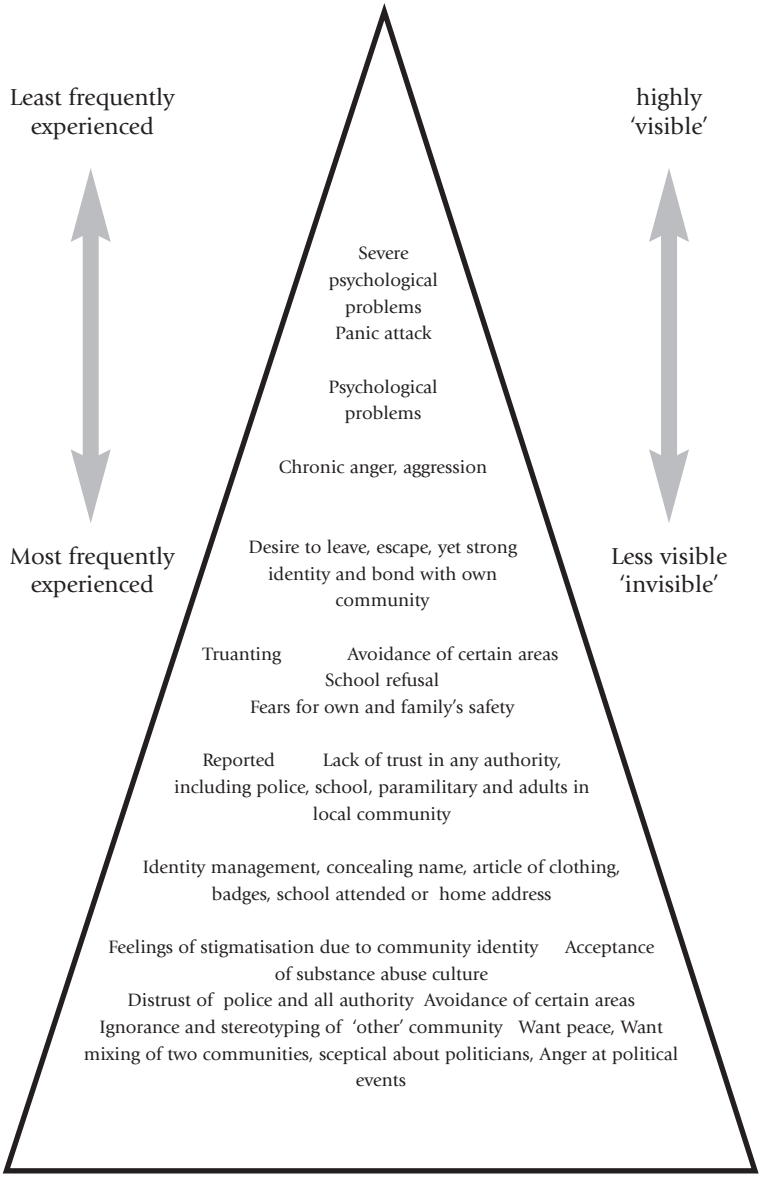


The interviews suggest that a higher number had been involved in Troubles-related violence, such as rioting. A number of explanations were offered for this, ranging from boredom, anger and frustration to bravado and peer group pressure. While participants in rioting and other street violence were often not members of paramilitary organisations, it sometimes seems to have been carried out in their name. Some relatively rare experiences such as punishment attacks at the hands of paramilitaries are highly visible, in that these experiences attract a great deal of media attention, or are the focus of a high level of adult intervention. Other experiences, such as sectarian verbal abuse from other school pupils at the end of the school day as a result of being identified with one or other community because of the school uniform a young person wears is very common, but is largely ignored by adults, is taken for granted and is not often the subject of intervention by adults.

Effects of the Troubles

Figure 3 shows the equivalent 'iceberg' in relation to the effects reported by the young people interviewed of exposure to Troubles-related events on them. Again, the relatively infrequent effects such as severe traumatisation, tend to attract more attention from the media, researchers and organisations wishing to assist with the effects of the Troubles. Severe as these effects might be, they are experienced by relatively few young people, however, in comparison to other effects, such as chronic anger, lack of trust in adults, isolation and feelings of marginalisation, bitterness at the other community or at the police, distrust of all authority, feelings of exclusion and marginalisation or lack of contact with or knowledge of the 'other' community. These more widespread effects are relatively unreported and unaddressed in comparison to the issue of the psychological traumatisation of children for example. Yet, by the extent that the less visible effects of the Troubles occur within the population, they are likely to have serious consequences for the young people experiencing them, as well as for their communities.

Figure 3: Effects of exposure to the Troubles and sectarian conflict.



1. Location, experience and effects of Troubles
One important conclusion from the analysis of these data was that both exposure to and the effects of the Troubles by young people in Northern Ireland varied according to the young person's location within Northern Ireland. The difficulties faced by the young people that we interviewed in the various parts of Northern Ireland were wide ranging, but they had common themes. However, there appears to be a close relationship between the geographical location of the young people and the extent of their experience of the Troubles. The location of the young person, therefore, has a crucial influence on both the experience and the effect of the Troubles on that young person.

2. Gender
Marked differences between the experiences of males and females were apparent throughout the study. Males were much more likely to be targets of violence, and consequently to be nervous of 'entering enemy territory' than females. Males tended to talk more about politics, about paramilitaries, and peer group interaction and gangs, although young women in the Shankill area also spoke of aggressive peer pressure amongst girls and female gangs. Females seemed slightly more likely to be in favour of peaceful solutions, although both males and females overall aspired to a peaceful future for Northern Ireland. Perhaps most significantly, males reported more direct involvement in rioting, joy-riding and other forms of violent or risk taking behaviour than girls. Girls tended to be the witnesses rather than the perpetrators of such acts, and were more focused on the family, on their brothers and sisters and parents and their experience of violence.

3. Religion and political attitudes
Whilst many of the young people espoused religious faith and beliefs, the identification with a religious denomination was of more political rather than religious significance. The sectarian divisions that all the young people live with meant that most of them had very limited positive contact with the 'other' community. There was evidence of bigotry and blaming the other side amongst some young people. Several young people confessed their ignorance of the 'other' community, and some said that they wished that they could have friends across the sectarian divide. Those who did have positive contact, with few exceptions of those in mixed families, had such contact through special schemes rather than through everyday mixing. Antagonistic contact was reported by many of the young people, and many were fearful of going into 'other' communities. Young people were very aware of how the violence of the past had sustained the antagonism between their

community and the other side of the sectarian divide. In spite of this, the majority of young people expressed the desire to see the end of such division. Many described their willingness to struggle with their own attitudes, their knee jerk reactions to other community, conveying a sense of responsibility to 'work' at attitudes formed in the context of a lack of exposure to and knowledge of the 'other' community. The overall impression was one of a generation of young people struggling to overcome the legacy handed to them by the previous generation. Many recognised the real divisions that marked their daily lives, and without yet being able to have a perspective on the full implications of growing up in a divided society, were striving to compensate for the negative effects on their attitudes. Yet at the same time, it is clear that some of these same young people participate in name calling, street violence and other sectarian exchanges. For some, such activities are part of 'normal' life in Northern Ireland, and for others they are 'good craic' and part of the rite of passage of adolescence, particularly for males.

4. Exposure to violence and loss, and the consequences of that exposure
The young people interviewed in this study are the second generation exposed to the violence and militarisation of the Troubles. The protracted nature of the Troubles, and their concentration in certain geographical areas has contributed to the habituation of many young people and their families to the violence, loss and fear that they entail. Young people reported the presence of security forces and issues of sectarianism within their communities, schools and social lives. Young people also described their experience of rioting, harassment by paramilitaries and other kinds of threats. Many young people reported losing their homes or having their homes attacked as a result of the Troubles, and many reported living in areas where Troubles related violence was a frequent occurrence. Eighteen young people knew or were close to someone who had died as a result of the Troubles, a further two had lost a parent, and several reported witnessing shooting incidents or having shooting or bombing incidents take place in their community.

Young people's attitudes were affected by their experiences of the Troubles. Some reported bitterness towards the other community and they displayed a tendency to blame politicians. Several rejected violence as a result of their experience, and some described their desire for peace in Northern Ireland. Young people's attitudes to authority, particularly to the security forces were particularly affected by the Troubles.

These experiences engendered a lot of fear and anger in the young people who reported always being wary about their own safety. Young people

also reported nervousness and grief as a result of their experiences of the Troubles. Some reported having psychological and emotional effects from their experience of the Troubles including sleep disturbance, nightmares and feelings of nervousness. Young people reported worrying about their family's safety as well as their own, and also reported silence within families about Troubles-related issues. Strained relationships within the family, and damage to the family unit as a result of the Troubles were also reported. Some young people also wished to emigrate as a result of the Troubles, either permanently or temporarily, and some reported being forced to leave.

5. Education

Many young people described their school, or the route to and from school, as the site of sectarian conflict. Children were attacked and threatened both on the way to and from school and within the school environment. Most of this conflict took place between factions within the school or between their school and other schools from the other side of the sectarian divide. Young people also described how Troubles-related traumatic experience affected their behaviour in school, and how schools – with a few exceptions - did not seem to understand the origin of their difficulties. In the light of the accounts given by young people, it is difficult to sustain the idea that Northern Ireland schools have been havens of peace in an otherwise stormy and conflict-ridden society. School uniforms identify children and young people as from one or other side, and thus can render them vulnerable to sectarian abuse or attack. Teachers are open to threat from pupils with paramilitary connections. Internecine feuds within a community get played out during the school day and on the way home from school. Children, parents and teachers all suffer the consequences of long-standing and highly publicised disputes such as that in Holy Cross. Yet the young people we interviewed provided evidence that school-based disputes and Troubles-related difficulties are relatively commonplace in Northern Ireland. Others described how some young people are excluded from school, and the consequences of exclusion being further marginalisation of those young people. Very often, these young people are also living in divided and militarised communities, and have very poor employment prospects.

6. Policing and authority

In the course of the peace process in Northern Ireland, it has become abundantly clear that one of the effects of thirty years of conflict has been the widespread loss of respect for and trust in authority. There is no consensus in the adult world on law and order, nor is there a

comprehensively acceptable agency to police it. Children growing up in such an environment can be expected to struggle with issues of authority, justice and policing. In this study, as in previous studies done by others, (McVeigh, 1994), the widespread disaffection of young people with the system of law and order was apparent. This disaffection sprang out of the very negative experience that many young people have of the security forces. Nor are these negative experiences limited to Republican communities. It seems that young people on both sides of the sectarian divide attract negative attention from the police and army.

Suspicion of young people also seems to be widespread amongst adults in general. In an earlier study, (Smyth, et al., 2002) the young people who were most marginalized from their community described their comprehensive lack of trust in adults in general. Young people complained that adults constantly suspected them of misdeeds, even when they were innocently standing around 'doing nothing.' They told tales of being wrongly accused of misdemeanours, and of not being believed or trusted in their local areas. Young people have been subject to paramilitary policing, often entailing violent and summary punishments.

7. Paramilitaries and young people

In interview, several young people described the influence that paramilitary groups had on their lives. Several adults described being recruited as members of such groups. Several others described their role in street violence within their communities. During the course of this study, recruitment of those under the age of 18 to paramilitary groups continued, in direct contravention of Article 38 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Optional Protocol 1379. Recruitment of young people is fuelled by events such as the feud between Loyalist paramilitary organisations, where young people become 'territory' to be claimed by rival factions or groups. Unless they recruit new members, they become vulnerable to being overwhelmed by their rivals. Therefore the recruitment of children has become a matter of competition between them.

The situation with Republican groups is less than clear. It seems that although attempts at recruitment to dissident Republican groups may be occurring, and are therefore a matter of concern, their success rate is much less than that of their Loyalist counterparts. There is a widespread belief that many of the paramilitary groups are involved in drug trafficking, racketeering and other criminal activity. Interviewees alleged that paramilitary organisations recruited children and young people as a

potential market for drugs or operatives in racketeering, and as small time peddlers of soft drugs. Other interviewees defended the practice of recruitment, arguing that membership of a paramilitary group protected young people from gang-like violence from rival groupings, and the discipline of belonging to an organisation deflected young people from a life of drug abuse, by incorporating them into an organisation that presumably has some semblance of military discipline and structure.

The United Nations approach to the issue of recruitment in other societies relies on the 'DDR formula:' Demobilisation, Demilitarisation and Reintegration. To date there has been no attempt to put in place pilot DDR schemes in Northern Ireland. Yet such schemes are needed and could use the pre-existing paramilitary command structures to ensure young recruits' participation in a specially tailored political education programme, aimed at moving them from a military to a political track. Expertise already exists in Northern Ireland in delivering similar programmes to young people. This could be expanded in order to build political education capacity with young people, whilst demobilising them.

8. Role of children in street violence: post- settlement violence
The involvement of children and young people in rioting and street disturbances is a continuing feature of community violence in Northern Ireland. Young people seen rioting at interface areas and engaging in street battles are often not 'signed up' members of paramilitary groups. It seems that certain cohorts of young people act on their own initiative, and indeed paramilitary and political leaders have had mixed success in persuading them to follow their direction. In such instances, some have espoused the view that young people who are 'beyond control' are more easily controlled if recruited into a paramilitary group. Apart from the dangers inherent in being involved in street violence, young people are therefore at risk of either confronting local paramilitary leaders, or of becoming incorporated into paramilitarism.

9. Age: adults' experience of childhood
The conflict in Northern Ireland has gone through various historical stages, with the most intense violence occurring in the early 1970s. For adults who lived through this period as young people, the intensity of that violence is the benchmark by which subsequent levels of violence are gauged. Fortunately, that level of violence has never recurred. For those who were young at that time, however, their sense of normality, and their judgement about the scale of violence is based on a period that subsequent generations have (happily) not experienced. Furthermore,

those who have lived through the entire conflict from that period onward, have a cumulative experience of violence that can alter the perception of violence itself. In order to survive and continue with daily life during those periods of high violence, it was necessary to develop a 'tolerance' for violence that has inevitably shaped the overall attitude and tolerance for violence in the wider society in subtle and not so subtle ways. In summary, direct and indirect experience of violence is a function of age, which places the individual in a particular phase of the conflict, with its particular characteristics.

The lost childhoods of the previous generation are not often explicitly addressed, nor is their loss marked in any way. Yet this foreshortening of the childhoods of their parents' generation may inhibit the protection of the childhoods of the current and future generations. Perhaps finding some method of addressing the issue of the childhoods of previous generations lost as a result of the Troubles might stimulate a positive debate about what needs to be done for the current and future generations of children.

10. National identity, politics and religion

Throughout the interviews only a small number of young people did not conform to the strict demarcations which divide Northern Ireland into two 'sides' within which national identity, politics and religion tend to be homogenous. For the most part, the young people we interviewed conformed to the patterns of division seen in their adult counterparts. Within Northern Ireland, the extent to which segregation – educational, residential and recreational - regulates contact between the two communities tends to be taken for granted. The terms of the Good Friday Agreement commits the parties to the Agreement to integrated education. Yet there are many who are less than enthusiastic about integrated education or other forms of mixing. Young people's education and experience of diversity is at the mercy of adult decisions and preferences. Some young people were fortunate to grow up in families where the adults were determined to instil tolerance and respect in them, and where every opportunity to learn about the other community was taken. Other young people were less fortunate. Several of the young people we interviewed described tokenistic participation in cross community schemes by the adults in their lives. Several described the resistance or inarticulacy of adults when confronted with tough political questions about sectarianism or issues of division. Some of these adults were teachers.

The reproduction of sectarian division in this manner is a matter of concern, not only for the young people concerned, but for the future of the society.

11. Families

Most of the young people interviewed placed their families at the centre of their lives. For some, their parents' experience of the Troubles determined much of their own experience, and for most young people what support they received or expected came from their families. However, for some families, already coping with other heavy demands and stresses, the attention paid to the children and young people did not adequately meet their needs. Whilst some of these young people might have been able to access individual help and support had it been available, for others, the family remains their emotional mainstay. There are some projects aimed at providing professional support for families affected by the Troubles, such as Barnardo's Nova project in the Portadown area. North and West Health and Social Services Trust has recently initiated a trauma project in partnership with voluntary groups in North and West Belfast. Overall, however, levels of family support, particularly from non-statutory sources with expertise in the impact of political violence is sadly lacking in some of the areas worst affected by the Troubles. This lack of support for families impacts negatively on families' ability to support their children and young people.

12. Citizenship and the future

In his report to the Security Council on his visit to Northern Ireland, the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations recommended that the administration in Northern Ireland should:

f.Ensure youth participation in the consolidation of peace in Northern Ireland. (United Nations General Assembly Fifty-fifth session: Agenda item 110: Promotion and protection of children's rights. 3 October 2000: pp 13-15.)

Whilst new developments such as the appointment of a Children's Commissioner demonstrate a newfound commitment to children and young people's rights in general, it is difficult to point to similar efforts in relation to the political inclusion of children and young people in the peace process. Young people we interviewed in this and in earlier studies such as the YouthQuest study, reported feelings of exclusion, of being ignored, of not being consulted and of consequent alienation from the political life of Northern Ireland. In a recent debate on the subject, one discussant offered the view that few young people were 'mature enough' to participate in political life. The widespread lack of attention to young people's political participation is contrary to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states:

1. Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Innovative projects such as the Fermanagh Youth Council, where elected youth representatives work alongside councillors to represent the views of adults and youth alike in the council, show the way in which youth participation could be embarked upon.

13. Resilience and vulnerability

There has been much debate and a division of views about the extent to which children and young people are damaged by exposure to disturbing and endangering circumstances such as political violence. Some argue that children and young people have built-in coping mechanisms and characteristics that enable them to come through traumatic events relatively unscathed. Others argue that exposure to such events damages children and young people, even if the damage is not always immediately apparent. Much of this debate has limited itself to examining the psychological state of children and young people in the aftermath of such exposure, with some attention paid to their moral development. Much of the evidence used in the debate is quantitative, derived from the use of standardised tests. This study adopted a qualitative approach, and focused on listening to the views of young people, and on adults' perspectives on their childhoods. Those interviewed described their exposure to violent and traumatic events in terms of a wide range of impacts on them, not merely at the psychological or emotional level. They described the impact on their attitudes to politics, to the other community, the impact on their ability to learn and on their level of educational attainment. The relationship with their peers, their siblings, their parents, with religion, with their ambitions for the future were all shaped by their experiences of growing up in violent and fearful circumstances. Some managed better than others, some did not manage at all. The personal, family and community attributes that enhance the ability to cope better with devastating events are important to understand. There has been a tendency to see resilience as composed of psychological or relational characteristics, such as strong family ties, or emotional intelligence. Based on the evidence reviewed in this study it seems that there is an educational component to it, and a socio-economic component. Those with education can survive economically, and can move into other geographical locations if necessary and maintain self-sufficiency. Without sufficient educational qualifications to enter the job market, resilience is compromised. Similarly, a certain level

of economic resources affords the capacity to obtain help or to become mobile, and move physically out of the danger zone.

Vulnerability is not only experienced by individuals, but also by whole families and communities. The concept of resilience must take into account the fact that the adults on whom children and young people could ordinarily turn to for support or protection are more often than not exposed to the same traumatic events that the children are, and are themselves traumatised and sometimes incapacitated – either in the short or long term - by that trauma. A revisiting of the idea of resilience is indicated. An examination of how families and communities can be assisted to cope with the consequences of political violence, and how they can be actively involved in their own recovery is long overdue. The professionalisation of trauma relief for children and young people and their families and communities, and the placing it within a psychiatric frame, has a number of hazards. So placing such relief is to put it beyond the reach of many who need it, because of limited resources or because of the stigma involved in availing of mental health services.

14. Silence

One great obstacle to moving forward in work with children and young people affected by the Troubles is the remaining pockets of silence in the adult world in relation to societal division, politics, and sectarianism. Many adults are not equipped to openly discuss such issues, and are therefore unable to support or help young people to openly and honestly address them. Great progress has been made in Northern Ireland since the beginning of the peace process, but further change is required if the advances of recent years are to be built upon. Certain groups of adults are more significant than others in the lives of young people. Parents, teachers and youth leaders are all important influences on children and young people. It is therefore important that these adults are supported to open further discussion on the difficult and sensitive topics related to the divisions in our society, and the damage that has been done.

15. Young people's aspirations for the future

One of the most memorable aspects of the data in this study was the way in which the young people interviewed aspired to protect their own children from the impact of violent societal division in Northern Ireland. They didn't want their children growing up as they had, and living through what they had lived through. Many also aspired to move beyond the limits placed on them by growing up in Northern Ireland. Some saw these limits in primarily socio-economic terms, whilst others felt the social and political narrowness of the place. For some, the only way to

overcome these limitations was to emigrate, and several young interviewees planned to do so. Lack of job opportunities was a frequent complaint, and again, emigration, together with acquiring a good education and training were seen as the solutions. However, none of these solutions were within the reach of the most marginalised young people we interviewed. For them a good education was unattainable, and those of them who left Northern Ireland tended to do so under paramilitary threat rather than in an attempt to better themselves.

The young people who are likely to come from the poorest and most disadvantaged backgrounds, the most heavily militarised communities and the most traumatised families are likely to be the least able to move confidently beyond their difficult experiences into a better future. The importance of targeting resources to redress this situation is difficult to overstate.

7. Recommendations

There is a need to recognise in terms of the allocation of resources and the location of services that the effects of the Troubles have been concentrated in certain locations and in certain sub-populations. North and West Belfast, the border regions and the Craigavon area are locations that have been particularly affected. Young people are a sub-population that has been particularly affected. More people were killed in the Troubles at the age of 19 than at any other age. Populations of children and young people have been exposed in particular ways to Troubles-related events and are therefore more likely to suffer certain ill effects. Yet this is not reflected in the location of services or the deployment of resources. The Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations on Children and Armed Conflict, Mr Olara Otunnu after his second visit to Northern Ireland pointed out:

a. Sustained and concerted attention to children is needed throughout the consolidation of peace. (United Nations General Assembly Fifty-fifth session: Agenda item 110: Promotion and protection of children's rights. 3 October 2000: pp 13-15.)

1. We also recommend that the Trauma Advisory Panels conduct audits of the way in which the needs of children and young people affected by the Troubles are met in their geographical area.

2. We recommend that the Victims Unit and the Victims Liaison Unit conduct a general audit of provision for young victims, and children of victims.

3. We therefore recommend that special assistance be provided to schools and youth clubs in North and West Belfast and other areas particularly affected.

4. We also recommend that special assistance be provided for certain youth populations such as the children of victims, and the children of security forces, prisoners and ex-prisoners.

This report has described how the Troubles has differentially affected boys and girls. Particular challenges are faced by adolescent males in some of the communities worst affected by the Troubles and sectarian division. There is a need to recognise this, and reflect it in any provision.

5. We recommend that the audits recommended above by the Trauma Advisory Panels, Victims Unit and Victims Liaison Unit pay particular attention to the situation of adolescent males in communities and sub-populations severely affected by the Troubles.

6. We recommend that any gender differences in levels of need be reflected in the level and type of provision for those needs, and that all provision be gender – sensitive and appropriate.

7. The text of the Good Friday Agreement on the issues of 'Reconciliation and Victims of Violence' states:

12. It is recognised that victims have a right to remember as well as to contribute to a changed society. The achievement of a peaceful and just society would be the true memorial to the victims of violence. The participants particularly recognise that young people from areas affected by the Troubles face particular difficulties and will support the development of special community-based initiatives based on international best practice. The provision of services that are supportive and sensitive to the needs of victims will also be a critical element and that support will need to be channelled through both statutory and community-based voluntary organisations facilitating locally based self-help and support networks. This will require the allocation of sufficient resources, including statutory funding as necessary, to meet the needs of victims and to provide for community-based support programmes.

There has been, to the best of our knowledge, no inquiry into what constitutes 'international best practice' with young people affected by the Troubles, in spite of this paragraph of the Agreement. Furthermore, the recommendation of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations on Children and Armed Conflict, Mr Olara Otunnu was that we in Northern Ireland should:

e. Bring lessons learned elsewhere to bear on behalf of children in Northern Ireland. (United Nations General Assembly Fifty-fifth session: Agenda item 110: Promotion and protection of children's rights. 3 October 2000: pp 13-15)

Although the Assembly adopted another of Mr Otunnu's recommendations to appoint a Commissioner for Children, there have been no specific initiatives instigated by the Assembly or the Northern Ireland Office aimed at young people affected by the Troubles. We recommend that paragraph 12 of the Good Friday Agreement be implemented in full by the Victims Unit, Victims Liaison Unit and other bodies charged with responsibility for

victims and for the welfare and education of children and young people.

In relation to the exposure of children and young people to Troubles related events, it appears as if there is no such thing as the average child's experience. Rather children and young people's experience is highly differentiated, largely determined by where the child lives or goes to school, and what role, if any, their parents play or played in the Troubles. Children's experience varies widely, from children who have been relatively untouched to those who routinely continue to experience paramilitary presence, harassment and threat and who live with fear.

8. We recommend that service providers strive to understand more about particular populations of children and young people at risk.

9. We recommend that service providers target children and young people particularly at risk and engage them proactively in preventative programmes, rather than wait for them to become casualties and thus access services as individuals.

10. The level of psychological support for children and young people affected by the Troubles seems to be inadequate to the level of need, and totally inadequate in areas of high need. Children, young people and their families described difficulties in accessing services, and feelings of stigma of using psychiatrically based services. We recommend a review of the level and focus of psychological support available to children and young people affected by the Troubles, and an investigation into how the problems of stigma can be addressed.

11. School based services are often overstretched and often narrow in focus, contributing to several children's Troubles-related trauma going unnoticed, even when it adversely impacted their school attendance and performance. The inability of schools to detect children's need and refer children on was particularly troubling. We recommend a review of school based support services and their role in assisting children and young people affected by the violence of the Trouble and sectarian division, with a view to improving the level of service and broadening its focus.

12. Children and young people repeatedly described their experience of school-based or school-related sectarian bullying, threats and violence. Such experiences were reported by young people as taking place within schools and en route to schools. Mr Otunnu pointed out the need to:

d. Support the capacity of families and teachers to protect children. (United Nations General Assembly Fifty-fifth session: Agenda item 110: Promotion and protection of children's rights. 3 October 2000: pp 13-15.)

We therefore recommend that the Department of Education conduct an inquiry into these matters in a manner that overcomes educationalists reluctance to speak about such issues, or indeed address them.

13. We recommend that the Department of Education also enquire into methods of improving schools' capacity to provide a broad non-academic political education for pupils, aimed at equipping them to be informed citizens of a peaceful Northern Ireland. This is in line with Mr Otunnu's recommendation to:

f. Ensure youth participation in the consolidation of peace in Northern Ireland. (United Nations General Assembly Fifty-fifth session: Agenda item 110: Promotion and protection of children's rights. 3 October 2000: pp 13-15.)

14. We also recommend that the political parties pay particular attention to their responsibilities to young people. The example of Fermanagh Youth Council, where young people are encouraged to take an active role in local politics, is particularly impressive. It would be to the mutual advantage of political parties and young people alike, and it would augment the momentum of peace-building if such projects were more widespread throughout Northern Ireland.

Amongst the recommendations made by The Special Representative and contained in his report to the General Assembly is the recommendation that particular attention be paid to children's rights.

b. A new body is needed to consolidate the focus on children's rights in Northern Ireland. (United Nations General Assembly Fifty-fifth session: Agenda item 110: Promotion and protection of children's rights. 3 October 2000: pp 13-15.)

The appointment of a Commissioner for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland is therefore to be welcomed, in line with Mr Otunnu's recommendation. The appointment of a Commissioner offers an opportunity to take forward the work of addressing the situation of children and young people affected by the Troubles.

15. It is recommended that the Office of the Commissioner will take forward many of the matters raised here, and that the Commissioner may wish to enquire into the situation of children and young people affected by the Troubles.

The issue of recruitment of children and young people into paramilitary groups is not merely an historical issue in Northern Ireland; recruitment is a contemporary issue, a practice which is in breach of international law and one which Mr Otunnu paid particular attention to, when he recommended that we in Northern Ireland should:

c.Remove children from paramilitary activity and address issues of community security. (United Nations General Assembly Fifty-fifth session: Agenda item 110: Promotion and protection of children's rights. 3 October 2000: pp 13-15.)

There have been no governmental initiatives either by the British or Irish governments or by the Northern Ireland Assembly on ending the recruitment of children into paramilitary groups. Discussion with government departments in Northern Ireland on this issue have fallen foul of two tendencies. First, the politics of condemnation, whereby all parties condemn the practice but no steps are taken to prevent or stop recruitment. Second the division of responsibility between Assembly and government departments, and between governments. Since the issue of recruitment of children is not specifically allocated to one department or one government, none will claim it, so no initiative is likely to be taken. Although the young people who are most vulnerable to being recruited are also likely to experience other problems, such as educational underachievement, only these acknowledged 'problems' are likely to be addressed. Thus, in the absence of any dedicated government initiative, the issue of the recruitment of children into paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, and the compliance of the various groupings with international protocols and standards is likely to continue to be ignored.

16. We recommend that the work of Mr Otunnu's office on this issue is taken up by the new Commissioner for Children and Young People, and that efforts are made to end the practice of recruitment of those under the age of 18, in line with international law.

17. We further recommend that steps are taken to demobilise, demilitarise and reintegrate (DDR) those young people who are currently members of paramilitary groups. As part of the DDR process, we recommend that these young people are provided with

the training and support to be able to pursue their political aspirations through peaceful and democratic channels. We recommend the pioneering work of Trademark in Belfast, who are engaged in developing programmes that could be used for this purpose.

18. We recommend that strenuous efforts are made to ensure that young people are actively involved in all aspects of policing and police reform in Northern Ireland. We recommend that community policing structures have routine mechanisms to hear and take into account the views of local young people, and that efforts are made to ensure that young people's rights are respected in all police work.

In areas such as North Belfast, it has been demonstrated that youth participation in street violence is highest during school holidays and where there is a lack of other leisure activities for young people. Yet, whether due to a lack of political will, or a lack of resources, these lessons do not seem to lead to a change in future strategic planning for volatile communities.

19. We recommend that an interdepartmental working group be formed to consider the issues of children and young people involved in street violence and rioting, particularly in communities with a history of street violence. We recommend that this group formulate a cross departmental strategy to address this issue and put in place preventative measures for the future.

20. We recommend the establishment of a public discussion or forum where individuals and groups can represent their experience of childhood during the Troubles. Such a forum would provide a platform for those who wished to speak about their experiences, and would perform a public education function for those with little insight or experience of the impact of the Troubles on children.

21. We recommend that the Commissioner for Children and Young People instigate an inquiry into the impact of segregation on young people's civic and political development, and their rights under Article 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states:

    The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form

of art, or through any other media of the child's choice. (emphasis added)
Such an inquiry should be charged with responsibility for making practical recommendations on how the impediments caused by the various forms of segregation practised in Northern Ireland can be overcome.

22. We recommend a review of the coverage afforded by existing family support services with expertise in trauma and the impact of political violence to families so affected in Northern Ireland. Such a review should examine the location of such services and their accessibility to families whose need is greatest, and to communities worst affected by violence.

23. There is a need for more schemes to facilitate the political participation of children and young people in local government and in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Such schemes would address the political marginalisation of young people from the peace process and contemporary political life in Northern Ireland.

24. Further research should be supported to identify and examine the components that facilitate recovery and healing within families and communities exposed to or damaged by exposure to political violence.

25. Methods of improving the capacity of parents, teachers and youth leaders to engage skillfully in open discussions with children and young people should be sought. We recommend that the Department of Education commission educational and play materials which would perform this function for parents, teachers and youth leaders in Northern Ireland.

26. Consideration should be given to instituting a coaching, mentoring or 'big brother/sister' scheme aimed at supporting children and young people from the most militarised and traumatised communities to aim and plan for the realisation of career, family and personal ambitions. This scheme could be initiated by the Department of Health and Social Services, working in collaboration with the Department of Education and the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

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