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Shared Living

Mixed residential communities in Northern Ireland

Jonny Byrne, Ulf Hansson and John Bell

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Institute for Conflict Research

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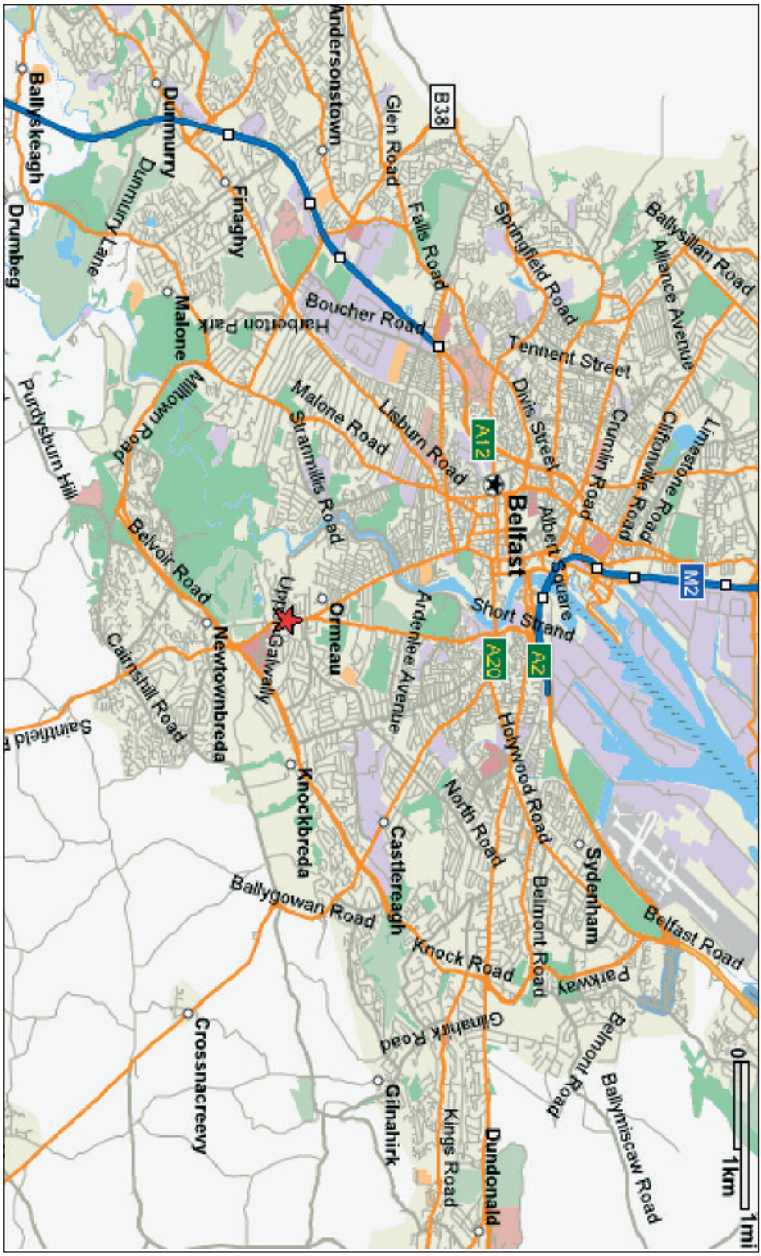
Ballynafeigh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Malone
Harberton Park
Boucher Road
Tennent Street
Purdysburn Hill
Milltown Road
Malone Road
Lisburn Road
Divis Street
Crumlin Road
Cliftonville Road
Limestone Road
Strammillis Road
A12
Belfast
Albert Square
M2
Belvoir Road
Upper Galwally
Ormeau
Ardenlee Avenue
Short Strand
A20
A2
Newtownbreda
Cairnshill Road
Saintfield R
Holywood Road
Knockbreda
North Road
Castlereagh
Sydenham
Ballygowan Road
Belmont Road
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Knock Road
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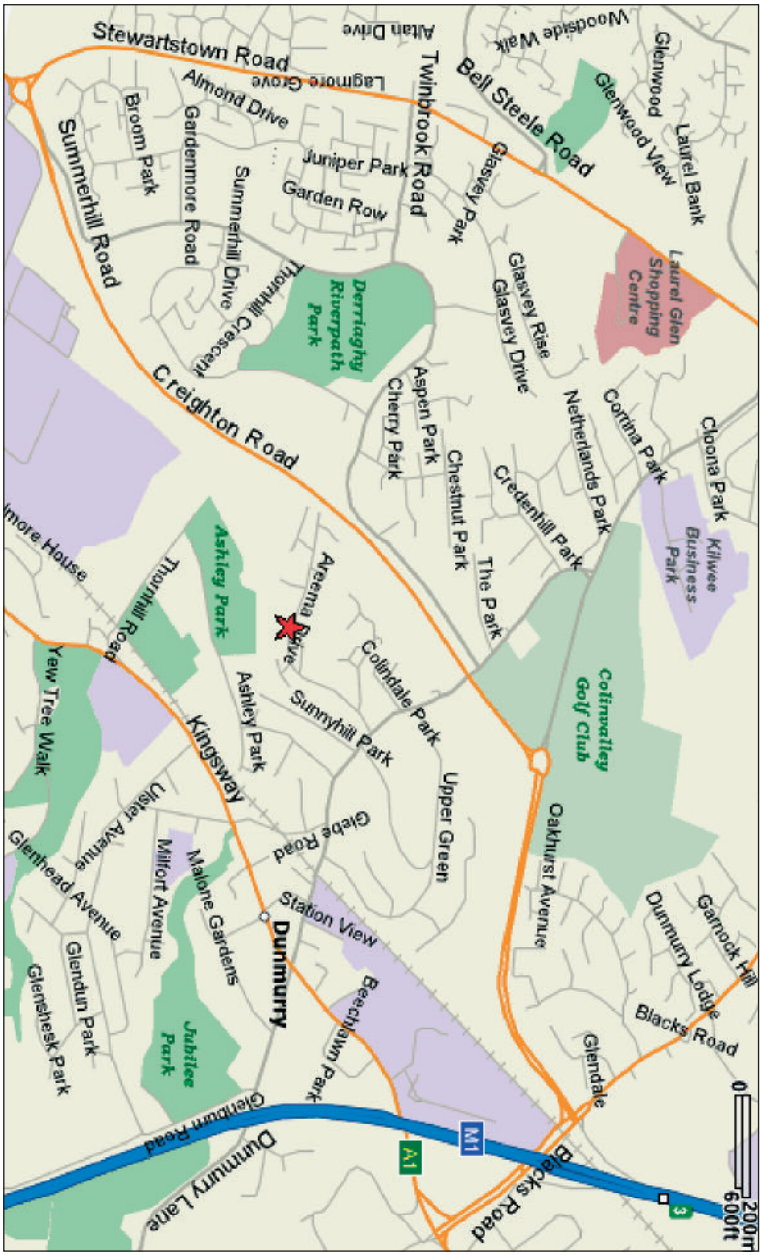
Cherry Gardens
Upper Green
Colindale Park
Oakvale Gardens
Areema Drive
Creighton Road
Sunnyhill Park
Sunnymede Park
Lenwood Drive
Railway Street
Station View
Salisbury Place
Auburn Street
Glebe Road
Harris Crescent
Ashley Park
Ashley Park
Kingsway
Thornhill Road
Richardson Park
Glenburn Road
Ulster Ave
Milfort Avenue

Areema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Glenwood
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Twinbrook Road
Bell Steele Road
Glenwood View
Laurel Bank
Almond Drive
Broom Park
Gardenmore Road
Summerhill Road
Juniper Park
Garden Row
Glasvey Park
Summerhill Drive
Thornhill Crescent
Derriaghy Riverpath Park
Glasvey Rise
Glasvey Drive
Laurel Glen Shopping Centre
Creighton Road
Aspen Park
Cherry Park
Netherlands Park
Corrina Park
Cloona Park
Chestnut Park
Credenhill Park
Kilwee Business Park
Ashley Park
Areema Drive
The Park
Thornhill Road
Colindale Park
Yew Tree Walk
Ashley Park
Sunnyhill Park
Colinvalley Golf Club
Kingsway
Upper Green
Ulster Avenue
Glebe Road
Oakhurst Avenue
Glenhead Avenue
Milfort Avenue
Malone Gardens
Station View
Dunmurry
Dunmurry Lodge
Garnock Hill
Glendun Park
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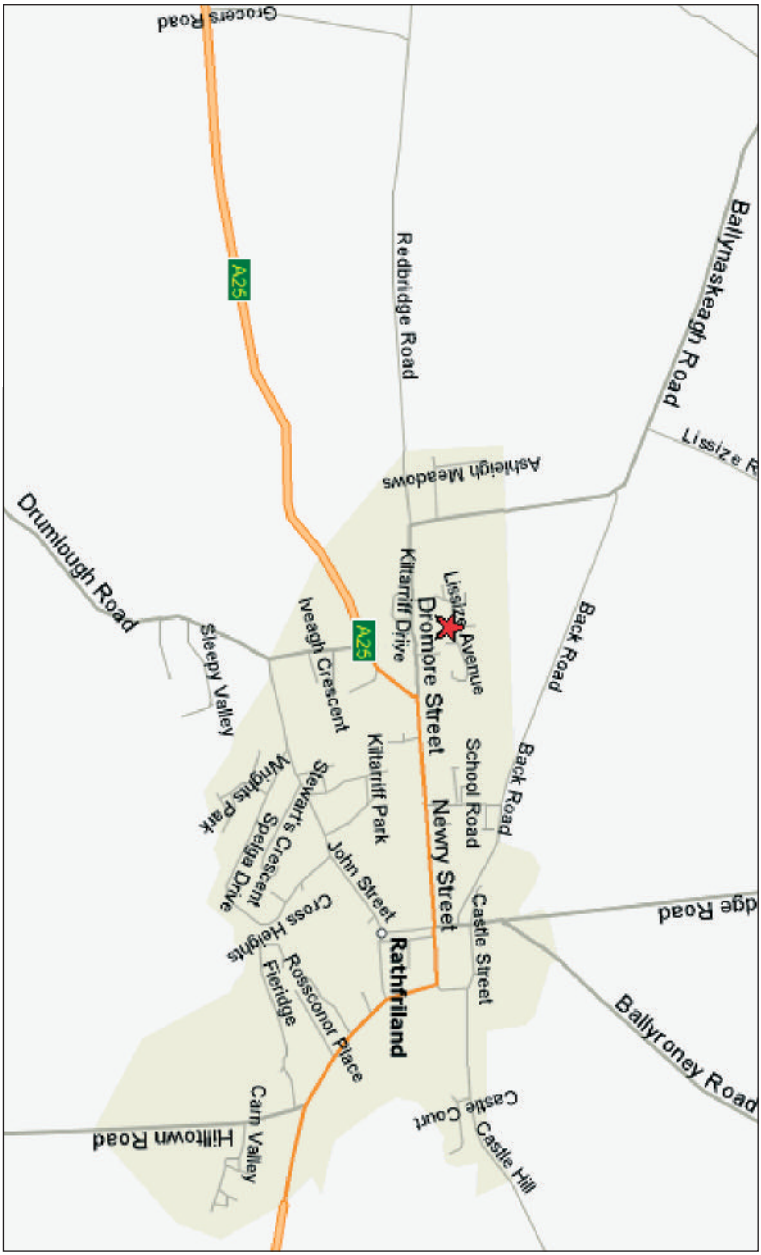
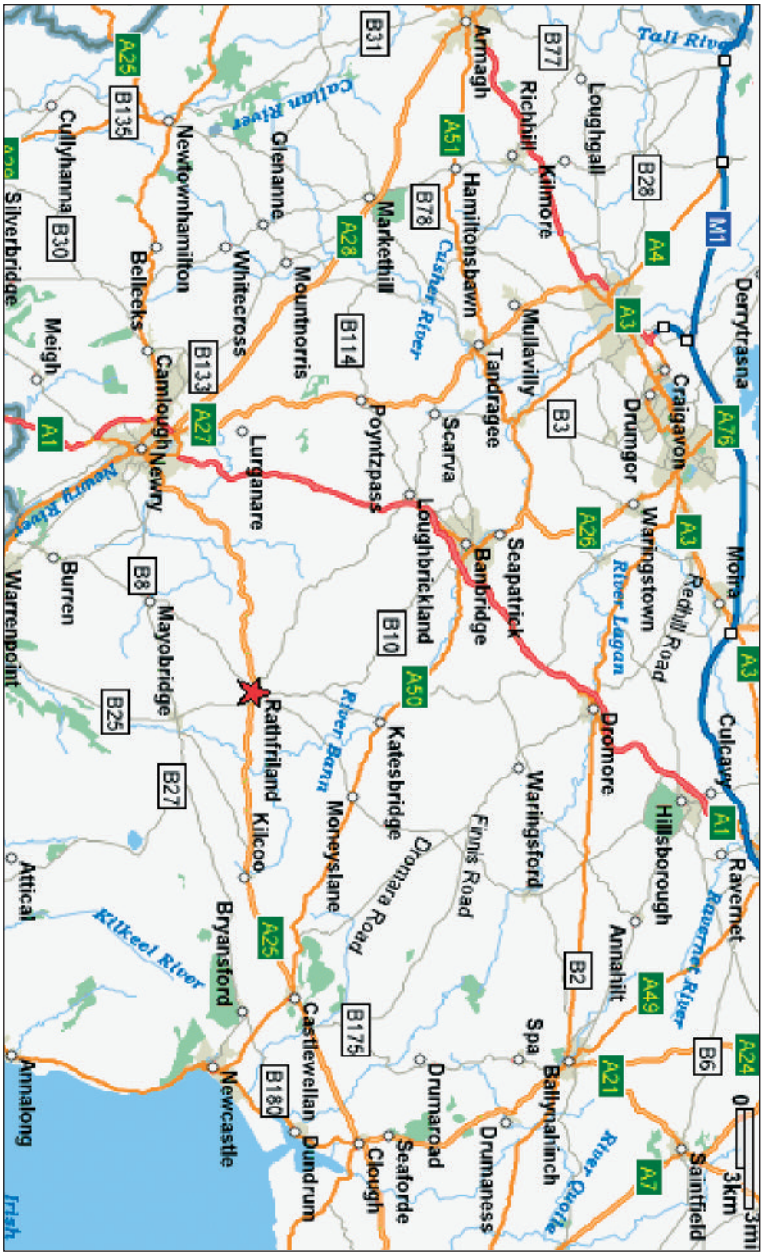
Rathfriland




Tall River
Armagh
Richhill
Loughgall
Kilmore
Hamiltonsbawn
Markethill
Mullavilly
Tandragee
Craigavon
Drumgor
Derrytrasna
Moira
Redhill Road
Waringstown
River Lagan
Seapatrick
Banbridge
Loughbrickland
Scarva
Poyntzpass
Lurganare
Newry
Camlough
Meigh
Silverbridge
Cullyhanna
Newtownhamilton
Glenanne
Whitecross
Mountnorris
Belleeks
Callan River
Cusher River
Newry River
Burren
Warrenpoint
Mayobridge
Rathfriland
Kilcoo
Katesbridge
Moneyslane
River Bann
Dromore
Waringsford
Finnis Road
Dromara Road
Hillsborough
Culcavy
Ravernet
Ravernet River
Annahilt
Spa
Ballynahinch
Drumaness
Drumaroad
Seaforde
Clough
Dundrum
Castlewellan
Newcastle
Bryansford
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Executive Summary

This research was the outcome of an eighteen-month qualitative study into mixed residential communities in Northern Ireland. The research was funded by the Community Relations Council through the European Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. The primary aim of the research was to offer an analysis of the quality of life issues and nature of social relationships in mixed residential communities. Furthermore, by conducting the research there was an opportunity to explore the value and relevance of the theoretical concepts of bonding, bridging and linking social capital in creating sustainable, integrated residential communities.

Three mixed residential areas were selected for analysis: the Ballynafeigh district of Belfast, the Areema estate on the edge of Lisburn and Rathfriland in County Down. The research in these three areas explored the perceptions and understandings of residents and people working in the areas of what it meant to call an area 'mixed', explored something of the history that has helped to sustain a sense of sharing and mixing and considered the current pressures that challenge that diversity.

The research involved qualitative and quantitative fieldwork in the three mixed areas, including interviews and focus groups with a wide range of local residents, community workers, representatives of statutory bodies and local politicians. In two of the study areas (Areema and the Lissize estate in Rathfriland) a short household survey / community audit was conducted as part of the fieldwork. Ballynafeigh was not selected for quantitative fieldwork because the Northern Ireland Housing Executive had recently completed a large-scale survey in the area (Carmichael and Murtagh 2005).

A number of themes emerged in the analysis of the three areas, and for the most part similar themes recurred throughout each of the areas. However, there were occasions when distinctive differences developed which could be attributed to rural / urban differences. It was soon apparent that many respondents found it difficult to define what was meant by 'integration' and 'mixed'. They perceived their communities as mixed, but were unclear of what that actually meant. For many there was a clear distinction between mixing and integrating. They perceived mixing as informal and casual and integration as more formal and official.

There were occasions when respondents declined to discuss reasons why their communities were perceived as mixed, for fear of raising the profile of their area. They were content with their lives and the environment in which they were residing. For many there was no magic ingredient that facilitated mixing, in their words a degree of common sense and respect for your neighbour was all it took. However a number of themes have emerged from the research, which provide us with a greater understanding of the social dynamics that exist in mixed areas, and what mechanics could be put in place to both develop and sustain these communities.

Indicators of Sharing

A number of indicators were developed from the three areas that local residents used to determine that they resided in a mixed community. These indicators were prominent within all of the areas and there was no distinctive difference in urban or rural perspectives. Theses included a cross section of people from both Catholic and Protestant community backgrounds; mixed relationships; a minimal number of sectarian incidents; an acceptance of cultural symbols; freedom of movement; the ability to express your culture; a high degree of community participation and diversity.

Changing Demographics

Within each of the three areas there was a clear indication that in recent years there had been a dramatic change in the demographic make up of the areas, and this has had implications on internal relationships, integration and perceptions within them. Communities were aware that further increases in the population of a particular grouping could result in the 'tipping' of the numerical balance and potentially result in a segregated community. Further findings revealed that there were growing minority ethnic communities moving into these mixed areas due to the perceived attractive nature of mixed communities. It was also interesting to note that one of the key findings in relation to interaction and building relationships was the length of time a person / family had spent in the area and not their community background. Subsequently, the influx of new people relocating to mixed communities was adversely impacting on the ability for local people to generate relationships.

Agents of Integration

It was evident that there were a number of organisations and physical environments that existed within communities that facilitated

integration. In each of the areas there was a prominent community group or residents association that championed concerns of local residents and promoted the area, both socially and economically. It was clear that such groups were crucial in both sustaining and developing their communities. A number of environments were also identified as key to allowing a community to develop internal relationships: leisure facilities, clubs / associations, shops and bars. It was also apparent that communities looked to people in authority within their area for guidance and leadership. In some cases this was the local clergy, who worked together and developed a close relationship where they promoted acceptance and engagement.

Community Participation

Throughout the three areas the research examined the role of local people in less formal community groups, programmes and initiatives. The underlying theme was that a minority of local residents participated in community led initiatives within their areas. These groups usually consisted of a small number of people who had been involved since the conception of the group. There was a large degree of apathy within communities to joining these groups, with respondents highlighting the amount of personal time and resources required. However, it was also clear that the majority of residents acknowledged the work of the community groups, and welcomed their contribution to the community as a whole.

Age and Integration

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

Levels of Integration

Within each of the areas there were various levels of integration, ranging from basic acknowledgements to socialising together. There was consensus from older residents that relationships within the communities were not as strong as in previous years. However, many felt that this was reflective of society in general, with contemporary lifestyles

very much centred on the individual and not the community. In each of the areas, people from different community backgrounds managed to live together in relative harmony. For many this was a suitable environment to reside in, but for others this was nothing more than co-existence with limited integration.

The research findings indicated that there were very few differences between urban and rural mixed communities. It was apparent that within mixed communities there were a number of complex social dynamics that existed which allowed for the facilitation of sharing and relationship building. A review of the theoretical concepts around social capital and community cohesion revealed that ideas around bonding, bridging and linking social capital can be applied to mixed communities in Northern Ireland to get a better understanding of the mechanics that drive these communities on.

A number of recommendations were developed from the research. These have been expanded in the discussion section of the report:

1. A consultation should be undertaken to debate and develop a standard terminology to be used in discussions on shared living;
2. Any future policies relating to shared living should have at the forefront elements of choice and opportunity;
3. Any schemes relating to shared living should involve the implementation and support of programmes and initiatives that improve and sustain community development;
4. Current strategic policy commitments should be translated into operational action;
5. Future policies relating to shared living must recognise the importance of key agents of interaction that facilitate mixing;
6. The development of shared living must incorporate the creation of shared spaces within the community;
7. A special focus should be placed on programmes and initiatives that develop and sustain relationships between young people from different ethnic and community backgrounds;
8. There is a need to develop indicators that measure the health, social and economic well-being of communities;
9. Any future policies and action must include communities that are already identified as mixed;
10. All communities should have an opportunity to participate in mediation and community relations training.

Chapter One
Patterns of Segregation

Across the whole of Northern Ireland, 92.5% of all 100,000 public homes are segregated…Belfast city was always pretty bad, but this is the worst ever, and may be the worst in Western Europe. Polarisation is greater than it ever was – it's a really tragic commentary on the state of the society (Belfast Telegraph 7/04/04).

The conflict and violence in Northern Ireland has left a profound legacy in the polarisation and segregation of the Catholic and Protestant communities and a highly divided society. The violence increased the levels of insecurity felt by people in many areas and resulted in increasingly limited contact between members of different communities. The increased sense of insecurity and limited contact in turn encouraged further geographical separation as people opted to stay in areas populated by 'their own' (Boal 1982; Poole and Doherty 1996a, 1996b). This has created a sense of safety and an increase in solidarity within each grouping, but also greater social distance and alienation from the 'other' and has resulted in a highly polarised society.

This polarisation has become manifested in a variety of ways, including largely parallel systems and structures for education, housing, social life and sporting activities and the situation in Northern Ireland can best be described as one where the two groups live apart, with residential segregation the most visible and distinguishable form of segregation. In this form, communities are divided by so called interface barriers, or painted kerbstones, graffiti, murals, flags and other emblems. The paramilitary cease-fires in 1994 did not put a brake on patterns of segregation, let alone begin to reverse them. Instead the violence associated with parades and interfaces led to an increase in communal tensions and levels of residential segregation, increased pressure on mixed residential areas and an increase in the number of interface barriers (www.belfastinterfaceproject.org).

The high levels of segregation and division have been acknowledged as barriers to securing a real peace and the long-term sustainability of a truly democratic and prosperous society and at the same time also holds the possibility of further hostilities and violence as society becomes more racially diverse:

The costs of a divided society – whilst recognising, of course, the very real fears of people around safety and security considerations, are abundantly clear: segregated housing and education, security costs, less than efficient public service provision, and deep rooted intolerance that has too often been used to justify violent sectarianism and racism (A Shared Future 2005).

However, the emphasis that has been given to the patterns of separation, segregation and polarisation has in part been at the expense of consideration of the levels of sharing, mixing and integration that continue to exist in different areas of social life across Northern Ireland. The focus on residential segregation for example has meant that little interest has been paid to understanding the how, where, and why of mixed residential communities and the fact that many people continue to express a preference to living in mixed communities despite the long history of conflict and violence

There are in fact a number of areas within Northern Ireland where people from the Protestant and Catholic communities have managed to live together in relative harmony. It is these mixed residential areas that are the focus of interest for this study. To date there has been a minimal amount of documentation of the less segregated communities, little is known about the make up of the populations of such areas, the local dynamics and the interaction between residents from different community backgrounds, how local tensions and difficulties are addressed, and the impact that wider societal tensions have on the community as a whole. By exploring how these communities have managed to sustain relationships and grow, it is hoped that policy makers and community-based organisations throughout Northern Ireland can learn how to establish and maintain mixed communities.

This report is the outcome of an eighteen-month study funded by the Community Relations Council through the European Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. The primary aim of the research is to offer an analysis of the quality of life issues and the nature of social relationships in mixed residential communities, while the research also provides an opportunity to explore the value and relevance of the theoretical concepts of social capital and community cohesion in helping to understand and sustain greater levels of sharing and integration.

Defining Mixing and Segregation

Residential segregation is not unique to Northern Ireland. Societies throughout history have segregated inhabitants of their settlement space according to various criteria, including racial, religious, and/or ethnic differences as well as the socially expected divisions of social class / wealth. These divisions are evident through the work of writers such as Varshney (2002) who examined Hindu and Muslim communities in India; Logan et al (1994) who studied the racially divided housing and labour markets in Los Angeles and Collins (1993) who documented the Palestinian and Israeli housing crisis.

Northern Ireland has been a largely segregated society since the seventeenth century settlements brought the English and Scots settlers to the region (Melaugh 1994). However, the violence of the Troubles greatly increased the levels of segregation between the two dominant communities and has helped to confirm this as the norm for many residential communities.

Defining what constitutes a segregated area has nevertheless proved difficult and a number of definitions have been used by different writers. Boal (1976) argued that a mixed area should contain more than 10% of residents from the minority community, while areas that were either 90% or more Protestant or 90% or more Catholic should be categorised as segregated. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has used this 10% minimum as their definition of segregation in their recent publications (NIHE 1999). However, Doherty (1990) referred to a segregated area as having a majority population of over 80% and thereby areas with a minority population of between 20-80% were considered as 'mixed'. More recently Murtagh and Carmichael (2005) have argued for a higher minority threshold and concluded that segregated wards were taken to have a majority community background of more than 70%, whilst mixed wards were deemed to be outside these parameters.

These different definitions illustrate something of the subjective nature of the concept of segregation and mixing, because the higher the percentage threshold is set for the minority population, the greater the levels of segregation will appear and vice versa. By changing the minority threshold it is possible to suggest greater or lesser degree of mixing or segregation. However, percentages only provide one dimension and one level of understanding of the concept of segregation, they tell us little about the levels of interaction or socialisation between people from different communities, and they offer little insight into whether a

community is simply mixed, or whether it is integrated, or even whether mixing or integration is valued and supported or simply assumed.

One of the aims of this report is to go beyond percentages to consider how people understand and value the concept of a mixed community. It does so by focusing on three very different areas that have been defined in one way or another as mixed: the Ballynafeigh district of Belfast, the Areema estate on the edge of Lisburn and Rathfriland in County Down. The research in these three areas explores the perceptions and understandings of residents and people working in the areas of what it means to call an area 'mixed', to explore something of the history that has helped to sustain a sense of sharing and mixing and to consider the current pressures that challenge that diversity.

Segregation and Sharing Across Northern Ireland

The literature on residential segregation in Northern Ireland has focused primarily on Belfast, largely due to the high levels of violence associated with the Troubles in the city (Fay et al 1999; Smyth, Morrissey and Hamilton 2001). From the outset of the conflict there were records of families being forced to leave their homes in mixed areas and the early years of the Troubles saw the forced movement of 8,000 families in the Greater Belfast area (Community Relations Commission 1971). It became apparent that many areas that were perceived as mixed were vulnerable to becoming dominated by one particular community. In fact by 1977 an estimated 78% of Belfast residents lived in segregated streets (Keane 1990).

However distinctive differences were identified between social class and levels of residential segregation in Northern Ireland and it became evident that middle-class areas were less ethnically segregated than working-class areas:

The first observation is that middle-class areas tend to be less ethnically segregated than working-class areas…a middle-class household is more likely to be located in a mixed street than a working-class household, and its neighbourhood is less likely to be ethnically transitional (Boal 1982: 270).

Boal argued that middle-class communities had a minimal level of social networks and residents rarely relied on their neighbours. Instead families and individuals were more focused on their own lives and less interested in establishing relationships with their neighbours than residents of working-class communities. Poole and Doherty (1996a) in turn

indicated that middle-class communities were perceived as less threatening environments whereas within working-class areas the presence of violence and fear reinforced segregation within the dominant communities.

Thus working class communities and areas of social housing were the most extensively segregated and the most susceptible to the pressures driving further segregation. Boal (1982) in turn identified the public housing sector as a mechanism for increasing levels of segregation between the two major communities as the public housing sector was overwhelmingly associated with the working-class population, which directly contributed to a high level of ethnic segregation within that class.

However, despite the continuing pressures to segregate in the early 1980s nearly one in four households in Belfast still lived in close proximity to people from different community backgrounds and perceived their area as mixed (Boal 1982). Boal identified seven areas in Belfast with significant levels of mixing at this time: Lower Antrim Road / Cliftonville Road; Lower Ormeau Road; Glengormley; Rosetta / Saintfield Road; Rathcoole; Middle Ormeau and Malone / Lisburn Road. It is interesting to note that since that time the majority of these areas have undergone significant demographic shifts and only the Middle Ormeau and Malone / Lisburn Road areas have remained relatively mixed. The remaining areas have become largely perceived as Catholic/Nationalist areas, with the exception of Rathcoole, which is now a predominately Protestant area.

The continuing violence however meant that the process towards separation continued and by the mid-1990s 90% of wards in Belfast were deemed to be either Protestant or Catholic areas and 39.9% of Catholics and 52.2% of Protestants lived in highly segregated areas, while the lowest levels of segregation were in middle-class areas of South Belfast and Holywood (Boyle and Hadden 1994; Poole and Doherty 1996a). By the end of that decade the Housing Executive indicated that their estates in Belfast were almost wholly segregated (NIHE 1999).

It is clear that as the Troubles progressed so did levels of segregated housing, particularly in those areas worst affected by violence. Incidents of violence and intimidation, along with feelings of anxiety and insecurity resulted in families seeking security and comfort in areas dominated by people with similar religious backgrounds. However work by Peter Shirlow and colleagues (1998, 2001) has concluded that residential segregation manifests itself in levels of animosity, mistrust

and division, which in turn impact on all aspects of people's lives, and on society more widely.

Whilst the high levels of segregation in Belfast were widely acknowledged as a consequence of the conflict, John Darby (1986) argued that the segregated ghettos of Belfast were untypical of the rest of Northern Ireland. His view was supported by Poole and Doherty (1996b) who argued that previous research ignored the reality of ethnic integration in smaller towns throughout Northern Ireland and indicated that:

There is considerable spatial diversity in the incidence of segregation and mixing within Northern Ireland and that, in particular, there is a major difference between Belfast and most of the rest of the province (Poole and Doherty 1996b: 77).

In fact they concluded that of 39 towns in Northern Ireland only 17 were highly segregated, although they also noted that the most segregated towns did contain a high percentage of the total population and they felt that:

The towns with the less intense levels of dominance are almost all small towns, so the urban population is heavily concentrated into those towns that are strongly segregated (Poole and Doherty 1996b: 235).

The most segregated areas in Northern Ireland were identified as Belfast, Derry Londonderry and Craigavon, which were also among the most badly affected areas of the Troubles (Fay et al 1999), while the majority of integrated communities were located in mainly rural areas in the Northwest, Northeast and in County Down. Six towns were identified as containing mixed communities: Ballycastle, Ballynahinch, Cookstown, Limavady, Magherafelt and Newcastle (see also Murtagh 2000).

These six towns all have an ethnic composition which is very mixed overall. In consequence, they also have isolation indices which are at a moderate level for both ethnic groups. This indicates that both the average Catholic and Protestant in these towns live in environments which are between one-third and two-thirds Catholic (Poole and Doherty 1996b: 242).

Murtagh (2001) also noted that there were three areas, or clusters, in Northern Ireland with a stable religious population, low rates of intimidation, a low death rate as a result of the Troubles and areas of mixed housing estates. The areas were:

- The Northwest of Northern Ireland, including Cookstown, Magherafelt, and Limavady, all with a balance between Catholic, Protestant and mixed estates;
- The North East with a high rate of mixing in Coleraine and Ballycastle; and
- Mid-Down centred on Downpatrick and Banbridge, where 88% and 90% of tenants respectively lived on mixed estates.

In 2001 the NIHE conducted a province wide survey to determine the level of segregation through their housing stock, with Local District Managers identifying estates which they viewed as either segregated or integrated. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number of mixed estates in Northern Ireland by Housing Executive District.

Table 1: Mixed Areas in Northern Ireland by NIHE District

Area	Number of mixed estates in the district	Percentage of total mixed housing stock
Limavady	11	83
Ballycastle	4	62
Antrim	7	57
Magherafelt	4	44
Larne	4	32
Coleraine	5	28
Omagh	4	25
Ballymena	8	16
Ballymoney	1	10
Dungannon	4	10
Armagh	1	8
Lisburn	2	8
Lurgan/Brownlow	2	5
Banbridge	2	2
Cookstown	1	2
Strabane	1	2
Belfast	3	1
Newtownabbey	1	1
Waterside	2	1
Newry	1	0

Although there has not been total agreement about which areas are the most mixed, or contain the most mixed residential areas or estates (some of the disagreement may be due to the use of different definitions of a mixed area), there is a general agreement that smaller towns away from

the main urban centres of Belfast, Derry Londonderry and Craigavon are more diverse and thus the levels of segregation in the major urban areas were not typical of Northern Ireland. There was a tendency in smaller towns and villages for people from different community backgrounds to inhabit non-segregated areas. However, determining how much interaction and socialising existed between groups and individuals has proved difficult. Anthropological research by Harris (1972) and Adams (1995) both referred to a strong sense of a common community in areas outside of Belfast. Rosemary Harris, for example, illustrated how Protestants and Catholics were able to live side by side in a rural setting, while also indicating that strict divisions existed. At one level there appeared to be co-operation and interaction between people from different community backgrounds. However, deep down, people appeared to be more comfortable and relaxed when relating to people from their own community background:

Often explicitly connected with one side or the other and that it was only with members of the same side that individuals could relax to talk freely, to say what they thought (Harris 1972: 147).

Brendan Murtagh's study of towns in rural Ulster also reported an increase in sectarian practices within the rural areas, and the importance of land ownership as a key variable in rural community relations (Murtagh 1999). He concluded that the history and experience of violence, along with the sense of community sustainability, were specific variables explaining the strong segregated attitude among residents in rural towns. There was however, an underlying view that attachment to place provided a sense of common identity for people who lived in rural areas of Northern Ireland. Adams (1995) concluded that frequent contacts between Protestants and Catholics increased a sense of security and helped to contain violence and intimidation. Thus a more ethnographic approach to life in rural areas has indicated how mixing and division have often been an element of the same process, but that a strong sense of belonging was a factor that helped to retain a degree of diversity and mixing.

The ethnographic research also illustrated that there is a difference between a mixed community and an integrated community, and that with a diverse and mixed residential setting there can nevertheless be high levels of parallel community existence in which people express a sense of neighbourliness as well as acknowledging the fundamental differences between the two groups. Smith (1998) noted that there were two ways of looking at integration, 'demographic integration' and 'social

integration'. Demographic integration is defined as the mixing of groups within urban space; this has largely been explored with the tools and methods of demographic research such as census data and quantitative analysis of trends. Social integration implies a degree of social cooperation between members of different groups and is best studied in small-scale neighbourhood studies and through qualitative research or ethnographic approaches.

Although there has been significant research into integration in other areas of social life such as employment (Dickson et al 2003; Shuttleworth et al 2004), education (Gallagher 2003; Hargie et al 2003) and marriage (Morgan et al 1996), there has been limited research into levels of integration within mixed residential communities and the nature of social networks that develop within them. According to Boal (1982) the concept of segregation is easier to understand because of peoples' experiences of the Troubles, however, the idea of mixing is complicated and difficult to comprehend:

It is much easier to understand why segregation exists. Indeed the dominance of segregation and the problems that may be associated with it are much easier to focus on than the dispersed process of mixing (Boal 1982: 277).

Although some areas had apparently the pressure to segregate and can be seen as a positive sign and a basis to build greater levels of mixing and sharing, it did not mean they were integrated communities or that they were necessarily stable communities. In fact Boal (1982) argued that many mixed areas were not necessarily stable units of ethnic integration but instead should be considered as areas in transition as the populations were constantly changing due to the nature of the on-going conflict. Their status as a mixed area may be no more than a temporary outcome of a longer-term transition as members of one community steadily moved out or away and were replaced by members of the other community. Mixing may in fact be a stage in a slower, and less violent, process of demographic change and drift to segregation.

Nevertheless Boal did conclude that even if their diversity was transitory such areas were still 'venues for meaningful and positive ethnic interaction' and he argued that cultural institutions, such as churches and schools, within close proximity of mixed areas were important for the process of integration. Brendan Murtagh explored the relationships and levels of interaction between residents of one perceived mixed community, Carryduff and Outer South East Belfast (Murtagh 2000). The research showed that the population of the area was more moderate than

the rest of the Northern Ireland population when voting patterns, social attitudes and contact were analysed and fewer people from this area were likely to be categorised as 'Unionist' or 'Nationalist'. However, the research also showed that there was a significant amount of self-containment especially associated with churches and schools, which had the potential to result in less segregation but also less integration.

One of the most researched mixed areas is the Ballynafeigh area of South Belfast, where four pieces of research have been carried out in recent years (Hanlon 1994; Extern 2000; Hall 2001; Murtagh and Carmichael 2005). These reports provide an indication of the changes in the demographic makeup and housing in the area, in issues and concerns of community relations and factors that could impact on the diversity of the area. Hanlon (1994) indicated that more people from the Catholic community were moving into the area and some within the Protestant community felt that this could impact on future community relationships. The summer period, especially around the Twelfth of July, was a time when community tensions increased, with increased levels of graffiti, painted kerbstones and bigger bonfires. The majority of people preferred living in a mixed community, compared to a segregated area, and felt that future relationships between Protestants and Catholics would either stay the same or improve.

The Extern study revealed that residents felt that the traditional population of Ballynafeigh was moving away and being replaced by young single people rather than new families. They were concerned at the increase in house prices, which were leading to more private rental properties and a more transient population. This was seen to have a knock-on effect to community relationships with the new residents being less committed to the area and causing erosion of the community spirit. Hall (2001) showed that there was recognition that Ballynafeigh was far more mixed than elsewhere in Belfast and this was one of the major reasons why people moved there. But there was also an acknowledgement that outside factors could have a detrimental impact on the sense of community that existed, especially property prices and the subsequent changes in the population. The study also acknowledged that tensions in the community increased during the marching season; while for young people the lack of youth activities in the area was of more concern that religious divisions. The recent Murtagh and Carmichael (2005) study revealed that a younger population, who are disproportionately Catholic and with smaller than average household sizes have moved into Ballynafeigh in the last ten years. But despite previously raised concerns about the impact of such changes, people

were more positive about community relations in Ballynafeigh than in the rest of Northern Ireland.

These four studies illustrate some of the earlier general discussions about the pressure that might be experienced by mixed communities and how other factors than political violence can be important in driving demographic change. They also link back to Boal's point about the transitory nature of mixed areas. But the studies suggest that while a rapidly changing population could lead to a change in the overall perceptions of the area, this is not necessarily the case, but even so it can reduce the sense of belonging and levels of cohesion within the wider community.

Attitudes to Mixing and Sharing

A number of surveys have also attempted to monitor attitudes and perceptions to integration and segregation in the workplace, home, community and school. Here we consider the responses on issues relating to residential segregation and integration under three themes; perceptions of their area regarding religious background; attitudes towards living in a mixed area and NIHE policy towards promoting integrated housing. It is important to note that in each of the surveys no definition of the term 'mixed' was provided for the respondents, therefore determining what people in turn perceive as mixed is problematic.

Table 2 highlights the main findings from five surveys. They suggest that during the 1990s people were less likely to state that they lived in a mixed community, although the more recent NIHE Survey (2000) suggests a different outlook, with 32% of respondents perceiving their area as mixed. This change in perception may be reflective of people's views in general of mixed communities as the survey also revealed that 29% of respondents thought that it was easier to live in a mixed community since the paramilitary cease-fires. The higher percentages suggest a much greater number of people believe their area to be mixed than is indicated by other statistical data.

Table 2: Perceptions of Home Area

Survey	Do you live in a mixed estate? (%)
NIHE Public Attitudes Survey (1990)	48
Smith and Chambers (1991)	36
NIHE Continuous Omnibus Survey (1997/98)	19
NIHE Continuous Omnibus Survey (1998/99)	16
NIHE Survey 2000	32

A number of surveys revealed that people generally had a positive view about the idea of living in a mixed community (Table 3), with a high percentage of respondents keen on the idea of a mixed area. However distinctive differences emerged between the geographical location of respondents and their attitude to living in a mixed community. The 1990 NIHE Survey recorded that respondents living outside of Belfast (79%) were more in favour of living in a mixed estate than those who lived in Belfast (52%) and the 1998 NIHE Survey also indicated that 22% of respondents from Belfast were not prepared to live in a mixed area, compared with 5% and 8% respectively in South East and North East areas of Northern Ireland.

Table 3: Attitudes to Sharing

Survey	Would you live in a mixed community? (%)
NIHE Public Attitudes Survey 1990	88
NISRA Survey 1991	70
NIHE Public Attitudes Survey 1998	82

The Young Life and Times Survey has regularly asked respondents if they would prefer to live in a neighbourhood with people of their own religion or in a mixed religious neighbourhood if they had the choice. In this case the results show that in the last five years there has been a steady decrease in the numbers of young people who want to live in an area with only people from their own religion, and a consequent increase in those that would like to reside in mixed neighbourhoods (Table 4, note that the questions were not asked in 2001 and 2002).

Table 4: Young People and Sharing

	2000	2003	2004	2005
Own religion only	40	35	36	29
Mixed religion neighbourhood	46	53	52	56
Other	5	5	6	9
Don't know	9	8	6	8

A number of surveys asked whether people feel that the NIHE should promote and facilitate integrated housing. Since 1990 a large number of people have indicated that the NIHE should be conducting this type of policy. However, several surveys have revealed differences in opinion based on the geographical location of respondents. In the 1990 Public Attitudes Survey, the largest level of support for this type of policy was in the West of the province (81%), compared to 54% in Belfast. In the 2004 Continuous Omnibus Survey 21% of respondents from Belfast supported this policy, compared to 41% in the South East, 51% in the South, 59% in the North East and 60% in the West.

Table 5: NIHE and Sharing

Survey	NIHE should promote integration %
NIHE Public Attitudes Survey 1990	65
NIHE Public Attitudes Survey 1998	70
Life and Times Survey 1998	61
NIHE Continuous Omnibus Survey 2004	45

The impact of the conflict in Northern Ireland has resulted in the two major communities living apart for several generations but the findings from a range of surveys suggest that many people have different perceptions of the level of mixing than the statistics imply exist. People were more likely to perceive their area as mixed than dominated by one particular group and since the cease-fires people appear generally more open to the idea of living in a mixed community. However, people in large urban areas with higher levels of residential segregation were generally less favourable about living in a mixed community. Those areas that were worst affected by the conflict appear to be least receptive to the concept of mixed communities. Nevertheless findings from the Young Life and Times surveys provide a more encouraging outlook, with respondents clearly indicating a positive view on mixed communities and a significant percentage of the population also thought the NIHE should have a role in promoting integrated housing.

Policy Development

The NIHE was formed in 1971 when the process of housing segregation was at its height. The Executive's first annual report set out the policy which the Executive has pursued since that time:

We believe that people should have the maximum freedom of choice of where they wish to live. The Executive does not believe that forced integration is any more desirable than a policy of deliberate segregation. We can only hope that the provision of an attractive mixture of housing and a change of the social-political as well as the physical environment may ease the problem of polarisation by encouraging and enabling families who wish to live in integrated communities to do so (NIHE 1971).

Unfortunately, the nature of the conflict meant that many NIHE estates became highly segregated along religious lines. Because tenants had the choice of where they wished to be housed, the majority located in areas dominated by people of their own religious background. The NIHE has been heavily criticised for containing and maintaining segregation through its allocation of housing (Keane 1990; McVeigh 1998) although Murtagh (1998: 835) refutes these criticisms, indicating that they were based on non-existent and anecdotal evidence:

Such an analysis is naïve and simplistic and ignores the benefits of segregation to communities experiencing the worst consequences of inter-communal violence. Ontological security, defence and cultural enhancement drive a self-sorting process of segregation and the Housing Executive has adopted a realistic approach to facilitate this through the allocation and transfer system (Murtagh 1998).

The cease-fires in 1994 brought fresh optimism to the political situation and the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement acknowledged the need to improve community relations and create an environment where all sections of the community could live together:

An essential aspect of the reconciliation process is the promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level of society, including initiatives to facilitate and encourage…mixed housing (Agreement 1998).

Under Section 75(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the NIHE is obligated to promote equality of opportunity between Protestants and Catholics and between Unionists and Nationalists. In response the NIHE published *Towards a Community Relations Strategy* (1999) in which they

set out the role they could play in relation to the promotion of good community relations among Executive tenants; and how they could facilitate and enable people to live in mixed Executive estates, if they expressed a wish to do so and if, in the circumstances, it was practicable.

The Executive's general approach to the issue of segregation had largely not changed since the establishment of the NIHE in 1971, which is based on the principle that it is up to the individuals to decide whether they wished to live in non-segregated housing. From the outset the Executive took a pragmatic approach to the issue of segregation, which included three elements:

- An openness to being persuaded of the practicality of any desegregation process, at some future stage, in any locality, particularly if such a process has the strong support of both sides of the community and the endorsement of the local Council;
- A commitment to conduct appropriate research into segregation/integration; and
- A willingness to facilitate experiments in desegregation, if and when and where the Executive is firmly convinced of the sustainability of such processes.

In 2004 the NIHE reviewed its integrated stock in order to assess and identify measures that would help to maintain this status and to also learn lessons about the nature of integration in the housing sector for application elsewhere. The NIHE also developed its community relations policy to include supporting people who choose to live in single identity and/or integrated neighbourhoods.

If we are to meet housing needs in all its forms we must work to make progress on integrated housing. We need to develop models of integrated housing for those people who choose to live in a mixed neighbourhood (Chief Executive NIHE 2004).

The publication of A Shared Future in 2005 reinforced the importance of mixed residential communities, and identifies the way forward is by developing shared communities where people of all backgrounds can live, work, learn and play together; and by supporting and protecting existing areas where people of different backgrounds live together. Around the same time the NIHE established a Community Cohesion Unit with particular responsibilities to focus on flags and sectional symbols; segregation/integration; race relations; interface areas and communities in transition. With regards to residential segregation, the responsibility of the CCU is to:

- Support people who choose to live in single identity or mixed neighbourhoods;
- Analyse and assist in the sustainability of mixed estates;
- Facilitate and encourage mixed housing schemes in the social and affordable sector as far as this is practicable, desirable and safe;
- Work with the Department for Social Development, Housing Associations and others to bring proposals forward for two pilot projects of mixed housing schemes in the medium term.

It is also worth noting at this point that while the NIHE is the largest single provider of housing in Northern Ireland, house ownership patterns have changed and the NIHE's share of the housing stock has declined from 26.8% in 1992 to 15.4% in 2003. In contrast private ownership rose from 62.7% to 71.4% over the same period, while the percentage of housing association stock and privately rented properties also increased. Thus while the Housing Executive is the key player in the provision of social housing and addressing the reality of residential segregation, it is not the only relevant actor and increasingly it has to respond to and engage with both the private sector and housing associations in responding to demographic shifts and the changing make up of local communities.

It is interesting therefore that one of the early initiatives of the Community Cohesion Unit was to commission research in Ballynafeigh, an increasingly diverse area, but one in which the traditional mixing was under pressure from private developments and market demands. The research indicated that community relations were more positive in Ballynafeigh than in the rest of Northern Ireland and concluded that the Housing Executive should consider developing a policy to stimulate the market towards the creation and maintenance of mixed housing areas.

Social Capital and Community Cohesion

Issues around the levels of segregation, division and polarisation of the main communities have long been considered as a distinctive element of the Northern Ireland social demography and linked to the history of violence and conflict. However, in recent years there has been a growing recognition that ethno-national social segregation was a more widespread problem throughout the UK and in other countries in the EU, and the riots in England in 2001 and in France in 2005 brought the issues to the fore.

The focus of *A Shared Future* with its emphasis on building a common view of the future of sharing spaces and resources and on increasing levels of mutual understanding and integration among all the

increasingly diverse communities in Northern Ireland has considerable resonance with Government responses to the ethnic rioting in England. In particular the concepts of social capital and community cohesion have been adopted widely as a model and framework to develop policies and practices which will encourage greater degrees of interaction and co-operation between different communities.

There is no single agreed definition or coherent model of social capital, but there is some consensus within the social sciences towards a definition that emphasises the role of networks and civic norms (Healy 2001). According to Robert Putnam (1995: 64-65) social capital is:

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

while Cohen and Prusak (2001) suggest that social capital is:

The stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviours that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible.

Similarly the work of Ashutosh Varshney (2002) on Hindu and Muslim communities in India noted the importance of diverse inter-ethnic networks as a key element of enabling communities to live and work together peacefully and emphasised the importance of a range of cross-community or 'associational' connections as a factor in preventing or lowering levels of ethnic violence in densely populated areas.

Social capital is thus the networks, contacts and social connections that help create, sustain and develop a sense of community and common interests at different levels. The three main generally accepted forms of social capital are bonding, bridging and linking capital. Bonding capital represents strong social ties between like individuals (e.g. family members or an ethnic grouping), often located in the same neighbourhood, which enable people to 'get by'. Bridging capital consists of weaker, less dense, crosscutting social ties between heterogeneous individuals such as friends from different groups, business associates and members of different ethnic groups, which enable people to 'get on'. Putnam (2000: 22-23) differentiates between bridging and bonding by suggesting that *'bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD 40'*. Finally linking social capital refers to vertical rather than horizontal

connections, such as relations between the powerful and the less powerful, the political elite and the public, or between social classes.

The general consensus is that interaction enables people to build communities, to commit themselves to each other, and to knit the social fabric. A sense of belonging and the concrete experience of social networks can bring great benefits to people. There is considerable evidence that communities with a good 'stock' of social capital are more likely to benefit from lower crime figures, better health, higher educational achievement, and better economic growth (Putnam 1995; World Bank 1999) and to respond more readily to interethnic tensions or violence (Varshney 2002).

There have been several criticisms of social capital, which argue that it is no more than another buzzword which lacks empirical specificity and any considerations of power (Woolcock 2001); that the concept is gender blind and ethnocentric (Davies 2001); and that arguments for social capital could justify the pursuit of sectional interests rather than the good of society as a whole (Perri 1997; Zetter et al 2006). A further critique revolves around the fact that social capital is defined in numerous ways ultimately makes it difficult to measure. Finally, for some social capital is too 'cosy' a concept (Taylor 2002), since in reality 'inclusion' involves its obverse, exclusion: there is a 'them' which helps define 'us' (Kearns 2004). While acknowledging these criticisms and concerns the theories behind social capital remain useful in attempting to understand the nature, scale and value of networks, interactions and relationships formed in communities.

In recent years, researchers have attempted to measure the levels of social capital within communities in Northern Ireland. There is an assumption that levels of bonding social capital are high and is often anchored by, and identified with, faith–based institutions. Bonding capital may be developed at the expense of broader community development and can therefore undermine conditions usually associated with bridging social capital, which is generally considered to be low:

The development of social capital in Northern Ireland is intimately wedded to expressions of national identity and to asymmetrical efforts to survive, protect and grow. The Orange Order, Women's Institute, Catholic Church and the Gaelic Athletic Association illustrate the way in which capital is constructed separately, within and not across, the two main ethno-religious groups (Murtagh 2000: 62)

Murtagh (2002) analysed levels of social activity and interaction by using data from the Life and Times Survey, which measured involvement in 46 activities grouped into four categories of social, sporting, church and club and society membership. His findings reveal that the stock of social capital is widely distributed, and intensely developed for some activities. Furthermore,

- Protestants were more likely to join clubs, societies and church based activities than Catholics;
- Residential segregation has had an important effect on the way that social capital is constructed and reproduced, but a high proportion of activity is conducted in mixed settings;
- Integration tends to take place in selective areas, activities, social classes and age groups.

Murtagh concluded that the results questioned the validity of single identity work that bonds in-group cohesion, without reaching out to other, or competing, identities. A recent study by Cairns et al (2003) explored the concepts of collectivism-individualism and social capital in relation to the two main communities in Northern Ireland. The results showed no evidence of any differences between Catholic and Protestant communities in social capital, although there were statistically significant differences in social capital linked to socio-economic status (higher socio-economic status is associated with higher levels of social capital) and between rural and urban dwellers (rural dwellers score higher on the measure of social capital) although in absolute terms these differences were small.

There is no doubt that social capital can be viewed positively and negatively, and the concept has generated tremendous interest in recent years. Even its more ardent supporters acknowledge that a greater understanding of the concept is required (Putnam 2000). However, the ideas behind social capital can be used to provide a greater understanding of integrated communities in Northern Ireland, and the underlying dynamics that sustain these areas. In recent years social capital has featured in discussions of community cohesion.

The concept of community cohesion emerged as a strategy from the numerous reports produced after the riots in England in 2001. Each of the reviews identified increasing levels of ethnic segregation and polarisation as key factors underlying the violence and emphasised the need for national policies based on shared values and a celebration of diversity to promote social cohesion. The Government subsequently established an independent Community Cohesion Review Team whose approach is summed up in the following quote:

Community cohesion is about helping micro-communities to gel or mesh into an integrated whole. These divided communities would need to develop common goals and a shared vision. This would seem to imply that such groups should occupy a common sense of place as well. The high levels of residential segregation found in many English towns would make it difficult to achieve community cohesion (Cantle 2001).

One theme running through the concept of community cohesion is the adoption of creative strategies to promote, create and sustain mixed housing. The Local Government Association *Draft Guidance on Community Cohesion* (2002) specified that strong and positive relations should be developed between people from different backgrounds in three key locations: in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods. How well integrated neighbourhoods would actually promote increased integration and mixing is still undecided if little social interaction occurred between people of different social backgrounds and spatiality alone could not foster the necessary interdependence (Jupp 1999).

DSD's *People & Place Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy* (2005) makes reference to the cohesion agenda and defines neighbourhood renewal as intrinsically linked to urban regeneration and the development of social cohesion and while as was noted earlier, ultimately the primary aim of A Shared Future represents the ideas associated with community cohesion:

The establishment over time of a normal, civic society, in which all individuals are considered as equals, where differences are resolved through dialogue in the public sphere, and where all people are treated impartially. A society where there is equity, respect for diversity and a recognition of our interdependence.

Thus although the concept of community cohesion is a relatively new one it has rapidly become established as a core element of both UK and Northern Irish government policy.

Research Methodology

The research for this project was undertaken between January 2005 and June 2006, with the main aims being the provision of a baseline of mixed residential communities in Northern Ireland; analysing quality of life issues and the nature of social relationships in mixed residential communities; and an exploration of the value and relevance of the theoretical concepts of bonding, bridging and linking social capital in creating and sustaining mixed communities.

The research involved qualitative and quantitative fieldwork in three mixed areas in Northern Ireland: Ballynafeigh in South Belfast, Areema near Lisburn, and Rathfriland in South Down. Within each of the three study areas interviews and focus groups were conducted with a wide range of local residents, community workers, representatives of statutory bodies and local politicians. In two of the study areas (Areema and the Lissize estate in Rathfriland) a short household survey / community audit was conducted as part of the fieldwork. Ballynafeigh was not selected for quantitative fieldwork because the NIHE had recently completed a large-scale survey in the area (Carmichael and Murtagh 2005).

The surveys in Areema and Rathfriland were developed with the support and assistance of local community workers. In Areema 121 questionnaires were completed, a 53% response rate, while in Lissize, Rathfriland 35 questionnaires were completed a 40% response rate. Selected questions and responses from the surveys have been incorporated into the qualitative findings for Areema and Rathfriland. The full analysis of each survey was written up and presented to the community groups in Areema and Lissize, while the two full reports and the questionnaires can be found on the ICR website (www.conflictresearch.org.uk).

Structure of the Report

The main body of the remainder of this report consists of the qualitative findings from the three research areas (Chapters 2, 3 and 4). These have been divided into sections highlighting the themes and discussions that emerged within each area. Subsequent analysis revealed that a number of similar themes occurred within each area and these were then documented and summarised in the key findings section Chapter 6). Chapter 6 concludes with an attempt to link these key findings with theories around social capital and community cohesion, and thus to determine whether these approaches can be used to understand the complex mechanics that existed within mixed residential areas. Finally the report includes a number of recommendations that statutory bodies, policy makers and community groups may take on board to facilitate the further support and development of mixed communities.

Chapter Two
Ballynafeigh

This is not a mixed community by accident, it's been like this for nearly a hundred years, probably over hundred years, you know, it's not a new thing; it's been here always (Community representative).

Ballynafeigh is situated in South Belfast on the middle part of the Ormeau Road, between the Ormeau Bridge and the bottom of the Saintfield Road, and encompasses the ground from the Annadale embankment to the Ravenhill Road. According to Monaghan Ballynafeigh has been referred to as:

A mixed community – politically, socially, economically, religiously, ethnically, age-wise, gender–wise etc. There are students living side by side with older residents, young families live side by side with Chinese members of the community etc (Monaghan 2002).

In the 2001 Census there were 5,251 people living in the Ballynafeigh ward, 59% of the population were Catholic and 34% were Protestant and other Christian related. The figures showed that since 1991 the Roman Catholic population had increased by 8% and the Protestant population had decreased by 9%. The Census also revealed that there were a higher proportion of ethnic minorities residing in Ballynafeigh (2.08%) compared with the wider Belfast population (1.37%).

Census statistics indicate that the majority of people were between 20-44 years of age and tended to reside in single person households; 23% of households in the area were married, compared with 39% for Belfast, and 51% for Northern Ireland; 48% of residents in Ballynafeigh were in full time work, compared with 38% of the population as a whole.

Perceptions of Ballynafeigh

Respondents were asked to define Ballynafeigh geographically in an attempt to determine whether there was a general consensus as to the precise boundaries of the area. The majority of interviewees maintained that the Ballynafeigh area began on the Ormeau Park side of the bridge and continued up the Ormeau Road to the Ravenhill Roundabout. As two residents explained:

My understanding is from the bridge up to the roundabout there at Rosetta, over to Ravenhill Road and up the embankment, that's the way I have it in my head (Resident).

and,

Start by the bridge, goes as far as the roundabout, chapel corner…down the embankment…by Rosetta…not as far as Ravenhill Road, but don't take it in, just down Ormeau Road. Also the area down to the bridge would be 'lower Ballynafeigh' and where Elgin Court is would be 'central Ballynafeigh' (Resident).

The only exceptions to this came from a minority of interviewees who contended that the area south of the Bridge, described, as 'Lower Ormeau' should be incorporated into any definition of Ballynafeigh.

According to the census Catholics were more evenly dispersed throughout the area than their Protestant counterparts. Catholics tended to be more likely to live along or close to the Ormeau Road, and the Catholic population was particularly concentrated from Baroda Street including streets like Burmah Street, Delhi Street, Candahar and Delhi Parade. However the further back one went in Delhi Street and Candahar Street they became more mixed in terms of their community background. Furthermore, Rossmore Avenue, Rossmore Crescent and Rossmore Drive located in and around the Catholic Church at the top of the road also had a higher concentration of residents with a Catholic community background.

The Protestant population was less evenly spread throughout the area and was more concentrated in Annadale Flats, Fernwood Street, Blackwood Street and Walmer Street. Raby Street on the Ormeau Park side was also seen as housing those from a predominantly Protestant community background. The streets in and around the middle of Sunnyside Street tended to be mixed, including Hampton Parade, and North and South Parade. Protestants were more likely to be concentrated in the public sector housing, principally Annadale Flats and in the streets between the Lagan River and Sunnyside Street and behind the redundant Ormeau Bakery site.

Interviews with residents and other local stakeholders revealed different perceptions regarding the general community background of the area. Initially the discussions focused on how the area had been perceived in a historical context:

This is not a mixed community by accident, it's been like this for nearly a hundred years, probably over hundred years, you know, it's not a new thing; it's been here always (Community representative).

and,

It was always a place were the two communities could live side by side (Resident).

Several residents who had been born in the area and had lived there for most of their lives recollected the mixed image that the area represented throughout the last century:

It was a good mixed community then in the 1930s…it was difficult to define but there was a certain amount of consciousness that people had…people were aware that someone was either a Catholic or Protestant but that was it…it was no big deal. There was nobody doing anything about it…there were no sectarian attacks in the area (Former resident).

One resident, who grew up in the area and was the fourth generation living in Ballynafeigh recalled their childhood with fondness:

When I was young it was great in the late 40's, early 50's. Most of my chums were mixed, Protestant and Catholic and we would have met them out of Sunday school when we came out of Mass (Resident).

Another resident who had lived in the area for 22 years had moved originally from West Belfast, because Ballynafeigh was perceived to be a mixed area. A number of factors convinced her to relocate:

I originally come from West Belfast where there was an awful lot of trouble…and I went through a lot of trouble in school so when I was pregnant I decided that it was not for my child…I decided it would be better to move out of a totally predominantly Catholic area into a mixed area (Resident).

Several interviewees pointed to the number of mixed marriages and families in the area as a strong indicator of Ballynafeigh being a mixed community. It emerged through discussions that the area was renowned as a place where mixed couples could live in relative stability without fear of persecution:

We are in a mixed relationship…and there is not really anywhere else you can live in Belfast to buy a house (Resident).

Another former resident who stills works in the area held similar views. She was brought up in a mixed household and was now herself in a mixed marriage. She referred to settling in Ballynafeigh based on the fact that the area was mixed and that it was perceived to be safe:

My husband and I are also in a mixed marriage, so he felt safe working and living in Ballynafeigh, he worked close by. That's why we picked Ballynafeigh to live in, because it was a safe place to live (Former resident).

Discussions with an elected representative also indicated that the fact Ballynafeigh was perceived to be mixed made it very attractive to families and couples who were themselves in mixed relationships:

I was dealing the other day with a couple that were looking for NIHE property from a mixed marriage, and they said to me that the only part of Belfast that we want to live in is in Ballynafeigh, because we think it is the only part of Belfast we would be safe (Unionist politician).

It should also be noted that discussions with the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriages Association revealed that although they did not present Ballynafeigh as a community where mixed couples should live they did conclude that:

Ballynafeigh is one of the few places that would potentially be considered as a reasonable place for those in a mixed marriage to live (NI Mixed Marriages Association).

There were some who felt that Ballynafeigh historically had been home to a dominant Unionist population, and only recently had emerged as a mixed community:

It would not always have been a mixed area to me…years ago, especially when the Ormeau would have been seen as quite a Protestant area…you just automatically assumed, I mean, Union Jacks everywhere and streets would have been painted…like the bars, Kimberley and the Band hall…all predominantly Protestant… it was seen to be a Protestant area (Resident).

Several interviewees felt that the name Ballynafeigh had particular connotations for people who were not associated with the area. There was an assumption that Ballynafeigh was a dominant Unionist community, associated with parades and bands wanting to parade down the entire Ormeau Road:

There's a view that everybody above the bridge in Ballynafeigh is Protestant and they want to march down to get to the Lower Ormeau, so what bothered me was it was partly media pushed, that it was a Protestant/loyalist area…I mean I would tend to say I live on the Ormeau Road, behind the Bakery, I don't tend to say I live in Ballynafeigh (Resident).

In one case, a local resident did not refer to the community they lived in as Ballynafeigh when talking to strangers for fear of the assumptions people would make:

I always say Ormeau Road and then specify, then mention the bakery…Ballynafeigh, to most people in Belfast is to do with the Orange marches and Ballynafeigh Orange lodge…it is all cultural negative baggage (Resident).

It soon became evident that young people from the Nationalist community were more inclined to refer to the area as the Ormeau Road, as they assumed people would associate the name Ballynafeigh with Unionism. Respondents were also asked whether there were certain parts of the area that projected an image of Unionism and/or Nationalism. Subsequently, certain streets and estates were identified to be more 'Protestant' than others, as one politician said:

I think the working class Unionist community in Ballynafeigh would be very much around Annadale and Blackwood Street. In and around there they would use the Apprentice Boys Band hall…that would be a focal point for that community in terms of leisure time and stuff like that (Unionist politician).

An estate agent who also lived in the area also referred to this:

The only parts of Ormeau you could put your finger on and say that they are not completely mixed would be Fernwood Street, Blackwood Street, Annadale Flats and that's basically it (Estate Agent).

Interviewees tended to find it easier to identity Protestant streets or areas based on visible symbols and events. One area in particular that interviewees identified as containing a significant Protestant community within the Ballynafeigh area was Annadale, the most visibly identifiable Unionist Symbols being the bonfire and flags during the summer months. However, unofficial figures from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) indicate a high number of Catholic families among the residents (25 %) of the Annadale complex:

Where Annadale would be an estate, which in the past would have been predominantly Protestant and still is, what I would say is there are a high degree of others living in Annadale at the minute. There's a significant ethnic population, and a significant number of nationalists living in Annadale complex (NIHE Representative).

Three quarters of the flats are NIHE property and the rest are owner occupied. Aside from Annadale being perceived as Protestant, the area had also developed a reputation for anti-social behaviour and other problems. The residents in the flats perceived this bad reputation of the flats as unfair:

It's just the perception from the outside…all you see in the papers are or might know of…used to have a very bad reputation, used to be paramilitarism, drugs and murders…but now you hear constantly is 'bonfire, bonfire'…or you would see pictures of murals and all (Resident).

Residents in Annadale also felt that the perception of the flats was somewhat undeserved and that this part of Ballynafeigh had been:

Demonised and blackened and when they take a photograph of it they take a photo of the UFF on the side, which it is only one of…this creates an image of the place as staunchly Loyalist (Resident).

Residents also expressed criticism over what they saw as neglect from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive:

I think it's sad…to lose that community, although I am sure that on certain levels in the NIHE they are saying really, 'Annadale pain in the arse, can't wait to get rid of it…because there are bonfires and sectarian tensions, paramilitary presence within the area…murals on the walls…really, if we just pushed Annadale over in the river…that would not be a bad thing' (Resident).

Discussions with the local NIHE representative revealed that a number of schemes were being put in place to transform the Annadale area that would include, among other things, pitched roofs and an upgrading of the whole block:

They call it extra-cyclical maintenance (ECM scheme), going early in 2006, and within it is a pilot block which would take 2 blocks at Candahar street, we'll put pitched roofs on them, we'll do extensive external rendering, new lobby, new windows and upgrade the whole block and we'll ask the tenants what they think about any of it, and if they like it then we will run out a major improvement scheme probably over 3 or 4 years in the whole of the Annadale complex (NIHE representative).

Ballynafeigh was perceived as a mixed community, given that large numbers of people from the Protestant and Catholic community lived together in a small residential area. Historically, the area has always been associated with housing both sets of communities, although it was apparent that there were pockets of housing within Ballynafeigh that were perceived as being dominated by Unionist/Loyalist communities.

Changing Population

There was agreement among local residents, that Ballynafeigh had undergone significant changes in the last fifteen years. The major change in the area identified by interviewees was the significant increase in people from the Catholic community relocating in Ballynafeigh. There was general consensus that in the last few decades the local Protestant population had declined and had been replaced by the Catholics. The area historically had been associated as a mixed community, and as such had certain qualities that appealed to all sections of the wider population. Subsequently, the demographic make up of the community was more diverse than neighbouring areas. The 2001 NI Census showed that in Ballynafeigh, 25% indicated that their religion was 'no religion or no religion stated' compared to 17% in Belfast and 14% in Northern Ireland. When asked about community background, 6% in Ballynafeigh answered 'none' compared to 3% in Belfast and 2% in Northern Ireland. It was clear that those residing in Ballynafeigh were less likely to indicate their religion or community background compared to other parts of Northern Ireland.

A local community representative felt that people in the area did not want to be pigeon-holed into being either from the Catholic or Protestant community, especially those who were in mixed marriages:

To me, I don't like numbers much…because they are judging again, it's a sectarian grid…so many people who couldn't give 2 shits about being either a Catholic or Protestant. A lot of the people who are moving into this district are in a mixed partnership…also a lot of the people who are moving into the area are moving in because it is a place where they could be free and be themselves… and they wouldn't classify themselves as either Protestant or Catholic, they would class themselves as 'another' (Community representative).

and,

If there were a survey done, the Catholic population would probably outrun the Protestant population (Resident).

A similar view was also expressed from a member of the local clergy:

Nothing radical has been happening in the Ballynafeigh area, but if you look at it in decades rather than annually there has been a gentle shift in the balance of a Roman Catholic increase in the area…there is nothing alarming about that, it is a fact of life (Local Clergy).

Recent research by Murtagh and Carmichael (2005) indicated that many local residents were aware of a sharp increase in the Catholic community, and a distinct lack of growth within the Protestant community. Several respondents were unconcerned by these changes, and simply felt that it was a natural evolution of a community. However, there were those that indicated that the emerging dominant Catholic community would have an adverse impact on existing community relations and the image of the area as a whole:

There is a decline in the Protestant population…if someone is saying this is a mixed area and promoting it as an example of a successful mixed area then they are wrong…it is an area in transition (Resident).

A further interviewee was more vocal in their frustration at the significant change in demographics. They were fearful of the consequences, should the Unionist population dwindle to an inconsequential amount:

Drinking in local bars…the only Protestant bar left on Ormeau Road I get a sense of tension…and people are fearful about how long they will be on it…we [Protestants] tend to be a bit over the top insecure about this…perhaps (Resident).

It was clear that the majority of respondents perceived Ballynafeigh as still a mixed community, but that it had transcended into one that housed a significant Nationalist or Catholic community. In the last decade there have been a number of economic and social factors that have impacted on the demographic makeup of the Ballynafeigh community and that have shaped people's perceptions of the area.

Housing and Redevelopment

The two key factors that respondents identified as impacting on the community were increasing house prices and extensive new building developments. In the last decade the area had witnessed a sharp increase in the cost of property, both residential and commercial. A brief snap shot of property prices throughout Northern Ireland highlighted the

differences between Ballynafeigh and other areas. A standard terraced house in Northern Ireland costs approximately £113,000, in Belfast approximately £111,000, and in Ballynafeigh £147,000. There was a general consensus that property values within Ballynafeigh had increased dramatically in the last decade. According to one estate agent:

When I first came here in 1996, a two bedroom mid-terraced house in Ballynafeigh in an average area would have been less than £40,000, now we're looking at £140,000 (Estate Agent).

Interviews with local residents reflected the views of estate agents that property prices had increased at a more substantial rate than most other areas in Belfast. Many had lived in Ballynafeigh all their lives and had paid relatively modest fees for their homes. They were pleasantly surprised at the value of their property in today's market, but also acknowledged the fact that they could not afford to purchase property in the area:

We are almost getting twice the money we paid originally, now here…but it is a pointless exercise thinking about it, because we don't want to move…it's a tragedy as well for other families wanting to move in, families who are in our situations, I'd like to see more children, rather than yuppies and landlords, taking over properties and pushing up the prices and you know moving students in (Resident).

This was the major implication of rising house prices in the Ballynafeigh area. Local families who had lived in the area all their lives and whose children hoped to purchase in the area were being priced out. They simply could not afford to buy locally and subsequently had to look outside of the immediate area:

I couldn't get a big enough house down here or I would have stayed … Ballynafeigh has gone through the roof price wise, it was easier for me to get a house in Belvoir (Former resident).

An estate agent made a similar point:

It's sad a lot of the generic characters and younger people in the area won't be able to afford it. There are a lot of bastards about, but there's an awful lot of decent, slightly underpaid people who literally cannot afford to live in the area they're from (Estate Agent).

There was therefore a feeling among residents that it was impossible to purchase a house in the area at this time, and that residents had been 'priced off the market'. One local resident who rented and wanted to be able to buy reflected on her situation:

As I say I live in a flat, but I would love to buy a house, but there's just no way…If I had the money, but there's just no way unless I get the lottery up and that's realistic, that's not being pie-in–the – sky. I'm talking just for an ordinary semi; I'm not talking about a big detached house sitting on its own grounds. You're talking £200,000 here for a decent semi with a garden (Resident).

The cost of housing was also seen as a particular problem for the local housing association. Purchasing property was difficult, with people seeing the potential for making a quick profit on their investments:

Houses were valued at £95,000 two years ago…if the tenant had full discount, it was £34,000 discount…so we were selling for £61,000 to the tenant…they are now selling for £159,000…two years later (Housing Association Representative).

There was an underlying view that even though properties in the area were demanding high prices, it was of little consolation. Their properties had increased in value but unless they wanted to leave the area it was insignificant, as very few could afford to move to bigger property in the immediate area.

Along with the increase in property prices, local residents were also concerned with the changes in housing stock within the area. In recent years there had been a significant change in the types of property, and there had been a move from standard family homes to Houses of Multiple Occupancy. The proportion of private rental accommodation had risen steadily in the last decade. Furthermore, existing large buildings had been converted into extensive apartments and town houses. There was widespread concern that these developments were impacting on existing relationships within Ballynafeigh.

The Ormeau Bakery development was possibly the most high profile in the area. Established in 1890, the bakery had been a prominent local employer and a significant landmark. The bakery closed in April 2004 and the decision to convert it into apartments and shops created mixed views from local residents, and the thought of the famous red brick building being demolished for apartments was too much for some people. However, the developer understood the significance of the

building in the area, and through several consultations with community representatives and residents indicated that the outside structures (red brick) would not be removed:

Obviously the accommodation is going to be more apartments based, and South Belfast has an overabundance of these…but that's the way it is going, and I have been working with the developer and they talk to people (Political representative).

There were several dissenting voices from within Ballynafeigh towards the new development. There was an assumption that 156 new one and two bedroom apartments would attract occupants who were unconcerned with contributing to the area or unlikely to participate in activities and/or programmes that both promote and maintain community relationships within the area:

Something becomes vacant and it turns into flats, so we've lost more or less, the close-knit sense of family that we used to have on this road. The sense of community, I think is starting to go, and I think over the next lot of years you'll probably find it will happen even more because we're getting more apartment blocks (Resident).

There was a strong feeling from several interviewees that the increase in HMOs and new apartments was attracting people who neither had the time nor commitment to contribute to the sense of community in the area:

When people move into the newer properties they tend to be people that come into an area but don't really engage in the area…An area like this has a relatively strong community bond, and that is one of the attractions of the area, but these people are not contributing (Local clergy).

and,

The impression we get is that the people who are occupying those apartments and town houses don't know each other, and they park their car at the front door, they go to work all day, they have a TV dinner at 6pm then they go out socialising away from the community…they are not interested in any part of the community (Local clergy).

It was interesting to note that several respondents felt that there was a significant difference in a person's attitude and level of engagement in a community depending on whether or not they owned, or rather rented their property. One interviewee speaking from experience felt

significantly different about their neighbours, community and home once they had purchased it:

I know when I was renting I wasn't that bothered who my neighbours where, or what they did, but I've more of an interest speaking from a personal point of view now that I own my house. Maybe there is something about owning your property or owning a house than if you're just renting, it's like students trashing places because they are not staying long-term (Resident).

There was a realisation that communities were changing throughout Northern Ireland. However, considering the history of Ballynafeigh and the strong level of mixing that historically went on in the area, what was now happening was of concern to local residents:

There is just not the same community spirit…people just keep themselves to themselves now (Resident).

and,

I'm in my house now 2 years and it was a really quiet street, and now over this last year it's completely changed because the houses are big houses and since I've been there there's probably 25 houses and 12 of them have been sold, and there's all young professionals in them now. I wouldn't be aware of any families that live on the street. There's one old lady that lives across from us and that's us, the rest are shared which is shocking (Resident).

There was a realisation from some interviewees that investors viewed Ballynafeigh as an attractive area. The time and effort put in by residents and community workers to develop an area where people could live regardless of their community background had, to a certain degree, been exploited by investors:

They want to come into a district, where you still have small shops, where you still have a community that functions and talks and meets with each other…that's the kind of lifestyle people want…but the fact that the area is attractive is putting house prices up, this is not new, now we are going to have an imbalance very quickly unless we get some kind of changed policy or policy or instruments to rectify that (Community representative).

The change in housing tenure had led many to draw the conclusion that Ballynafeigh had moved from a settled community to one that was more transient:

The demographics in the district have also changed over the years…there is more of a transient population…you see, there are too many apartments…what are they really good for…now you have university students and city workers moving into the area…and at the weekend you find that they leave the area and return home to their other houses…this didn't happen years ago…and this would have an impact on relationships within Ballynafeigh (Former resident).

It was not just the impact of young professionals moving into the area that stimulated debate. There was a growing awareness that an increasing number of students were moving into the HMOs. Interviewees often referred to the situation in the Holy Lands and in Stranmillis, as examples of what could happen to an area where landlords owned most of the properties and began letting them out as HMOs. In recent years there have been problems with anti-social behaviour and friction has developed between residents and the student population:

I think that actually Stranmillis has probably got it's fill of them and because of where we are situated, we're very close to the university, the city centre, we're close to everything, so it's ideal for anybody that's looking into an area, not just students, but it seems to be we're getting students and young professionals because of the type of accommodation that is going up (Resident).

and,

There are a lot of students moving into the area now, people coming and going and you can't put a face to a name now. It used to be you would have known who your neighbours where, and you could have left your front door open (Resident).

Several interviewees questioned how much contribution the new residents would make to the community:

The impression we get is that the people who are occupying those apartments and town houses don't know each other, and they park their car at the front door, they go to work or school all day, they have a TV dinner at 6pm then they go out socialising away from the community…they are not interested in any part of the community (Local clergy).

Discussions with developers and estate agents revealed that there were a minimal number of sites for development left within the Ballynafeigh area. Similarly the potential for HMOs was declining as investors had purchased nearly all available properties and less and less houses were coming on the market.

It's probably less of an investor area now. When prices are up and coming that's when investors move in, but now it's sort of levelled off. It's still increasing, but not at the growth of 5 years ago. I think you'll find that investors are levelling off as well, there's not as many new investors as there maybe would have been 2/3 years ago (Estate Agent).

It became apparent that local residents were aware of the changing demographics in their community, and felt that this was the result of increased house prices and extensive new build developments. It is ironic that the sense of community created within Ballynafeigh and the effort put in by residents to mix and create an environment where 'people can get on' may result in the area changing. It is an attractive place to live and the more people who move into the area, carry with them the potential to 'tip' the numerical balance of the community, and create an imbalance, were one section of the community totally dominates the other.

Minority Ethnic Communities

Several interviewees also noted the rise in members from minority ethnic communities that were choosing to reside in the Ballynafeigh area. Belfast GEMS, which runs a job-club in the local community house, had experienced an increase in people from a minority ethnic background among their clients. This had also led them to initiate a course titled 'Language for work':

Which is essentially for people coming into Ireland who can't speak English, so this is basic literature and reading, so they can read a health and safety sign or the basic stuff (Community worker).

Furthermore, the local Catholic Church had also found that there had been an increase in minority groups, particularly from Poland, Eastern Europe and the Philippines. The church ran a monthly mass in Polish and facilitated other initiatives to assist new groups to the community:

The church have run a number of events for these groups of people…we held an international food night and music and dance for everyone…was a chance to get to meet people, we also ran some English classes for a few months…to provide the basic skills. The majority of these people came from the immediate Ballynafeigh area…there wasn't a huge number but still enough…there have not been any related problems to this group…like they haven't reported any incidents of discrimination (Local clergy).

Even though this had been quite a recent phenomenon, a number of factors were attributed to the change in local demographics. The reputation of the area as being quiet, stable and relatively mixed was one possible explanation for the rise in people from minority ethnic backgrounds:

In talks with two residents from a minority background they had both been recommended to settle in Ballynafeigh by friends, as it was a 'nice area'. One of them felt that the area was appealing, as there were no murals or painted kerbstones as in other parts of Belfast and therefore it 'looked friendly' (Community worker).

According to several interviewees many minority ethnic people had relocated to Ballynafeigh from other areas where they had previously been intimidated and/or suffered racial harassment:

We're finding a lot of African people etc are telling others to avoid certain areas and come here (Ballynafeigh) and that's sad, also for those areas because those areas are suffering. We tend to get a lot of grief as well. But it is interesting and makes the place much more cosmopolitan than it was (Estate Agent).

This was also the case in the Annadale Flats where there had been an increase in the number of Chinese tenants. According to the Housing Executive, this was a recent development and that Chinese families who had come under attack elsewhere had applied for housing in places such as Annadale. A representative from the NIHE also made the point that this had encouraged others within the Chinese community to relocate in Annadale:

I think the fact that they appear to be living happily within the Annadale environment is reassuring to other Chinese families who may want to live there in social stock, and certainly we would work closely with the local residents' association up there to attempt to make everyone as welcome as possible in that area (NIHE representative)

According to one respondent a certain level of tension had emerged in the area as a result of the increase in the numbers of ethnic minorities now residing in the area. There appeared to be little evidence of a concerted campaign against these groups, but there had been a number of isolated incidents:

A lot of the tension in the area, at the minute, would be between the local thugs and ethnic minorities…they don't like it…I suppose they see these people

coming in and they are relatively well off and they are able to rent a house for £700 a month…drive a car…there were Polish guys put out off Haypark Avenue two months ago (Housing Association representative).

Facilitating Sharing

According to respondents there were two main groups that were responsible for facilitating relationships within the community and maintaining the sense of integration that existed. The Ballynafeigh Community Development Association (BCDA) had been in existence since 1974 and was established by local residents in an attempt to preserve the mixed identity of the area, during a period marked with tension and uncertainty:

During the worst years of the Troubles this was a place where a person could come in, no matter what your title was or what your background was…things like that were of no importance, we build a relationship first and everything comes from that (BCDA representative).

Several interviewees were quick to acknowledge the work that the BCDA had conducted within the area, and felt that it was crucial in promoting mixed living and shared activities for local residents. The BCDA is based in the heart of Ballynafeigh and holds a number of programmes and activities for the community, including job clubs and an advice centre:

There is a lot going on in the Community House…I think, if we hadn't had the community house, then there would be no mixing at all (Resident).

and,

It plays an important link for people who live on this road, there is so much going on…It is a habit, always reading in the windows to check what is happening (Resident).

The BCDA promotes the area as a mixed one; it is not something that they attempt to disguise or an issue that they shy away from. Local residents are aware of this, and it is something that they welcome. The majority are proud about where they live, and they appreciate the effort and time exerted by those associated with the BCDA into maintaining and promoting the positive aspects of their community:

They are essentially the only group who encourage debate about what is a mixed community, what is good about living in a mixed community, what it is we need to hang on to, and how does the future look? (Resident).

The second group often referred to by respondents as playing an important role in facilitating community relationships was the local Clergy Fellowship. This was made up of the main Methodist, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches in the area. The group had originated in the early 1970s during the worst years of the Troubles. It had developed as a reaction to the atrocities experienced by both communities in the area:

The Clergy Fellowship was founded partly as a result of the Troubles, when the representatives of the two faiths in the early 1970s established a strong, working relationship…when things became tense they saw the need for a united presence (Local clergy).

From the outset, the Fellowship promoted initiatives and programmes that involved all sections of the community. They led by example, meeting once a month to discuss issues pertaining to their area. They have been seen as prominent throughout the community, often walking together and meeting in local cafes and the community house. They are members of the BCDA and provide support and resources for community festivals and other events:

We have organised and participated in a number of things including the local Housing Association, picnics, quiz nights, carol services, social evenings…everything is open to the entire community, nobody is excluded (Local clergy).

According to several interviewees the Fellowship were very prominent during the parades dispute that dominated Ballynafeigh and the Ormeau Road during the 1990s. This was a difficult time for everyone who lived in Ballynafeigh and the lower Ormeau Road, with increased tensions, riots and nightly disturbances during the marching season. The fellowship brought a degree of stability, and residents looked to them for support and leadership at a time when events could have divided the community:

When things were tense during the marching season down on the Ormeau Bridge the churches came together and they held their own parade that was representative of all sides. They came together for a public meeting in the park and marched up to the church. That brought all the people together, attracted media interest and conveyed a very different profile of the area, and helped to sustain a good feeling within the Ballynafeigh community (Local clergy).

In recent years the Fellowship has had to adapt along with the political climate, in that issues around conflict related deaths and assaults have all

but ceased. They have become more involved in issues relating to young people, ethnic minorities and maintaining existing community relationships within the area:

In the past the issues were clear and visible, but now things are a lot more ambiguous. I think that the fellowship has yet to find its true purpose here in Ballynafeigh…the situation, dynamics and needs of the people have changed and the fellowship has to be able to address these issues (Local clergy).

and,

There has always been that tradition of togetherness…but the fellowship has adapted over the years and moved into other areas since the decline in the number of people injured/killed as a result of the troubles…it concerns itself more with issues in the community, such as anti-social behaviour and young people (Local clergy).

The Fellowship was clearly aware of the need to embrace change and adapt to emerging issues facing the Ballynafeigh community. They recognised the changing demographics and the potential impact that they could have on the community as a whole. There was a degree of concern about the building developments and the number of apartments in the area, along with the types of people moving into them. There was a degree of uncertainty as to whether these new residents would engage in community issues and contribute to the local area, both socially and economically.

Mixing and Sharing

Within Ballynafeigh there were a number of opportunities for people young and old, to mix, engage and interact together. These usually occurred in social, rather than work settings, and had existed within the community for several years. Several interviewees noted that there where large amounts of shared space within the community:

There are several social spaces that the community access…like pubs, where people can mix freely…the community centre and church halls (BCDA representative).

There was a feeling that residents could easily socialise in any of the many pubs and bars on the Ormeau Road and that the variety of shops also provided 'day to day interaction':

We go to a bar up the road and I wouldn't say it's a completely mixed bar, but everyone is very nice…never any trouble or no word of religion or anything and everybody talks to everybody…I don't know what Religion this pub is (Resident).

The main pubs on the Ormeau Road were all described as being mixed, both with regards to staff and also customers:

All the way through the Troubles, the Errigle Inn and the Pavilion Bar always remained mixed pubs…you could go into the Pavilion Bar and see the All Ireland final in one end of the bar and Chelsea playing Man United in the other (Housing Association representative).

One local bar owner was keen to stress that community background was not a significant factor in the clientele who frequented the establishment. Furthermore, the bar had introduced a number of measures to reinforce the view that it was a mixed environment:

We have a sign at the bottom of the stairs and at the top of the stairs that we don't allow any football tops that might cause offence to anyone else…so that would mean football tops like Rangers, Celtic, Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Linfield…I think we are one of the few bars that would show the old-firm games live on TV and there is never any problems…here we just get on with it…maybe it is because this is a mixed area (Bar Owner).

However, some local residents felt that certain public houses were more supported by either a majority Catholic or Protestant community. They had resided in the area for many years and were of the view that historically bars were portrayed as either Catholic or Protestant; thus, this image would always be associated with the bars:

The Parador is seen very much as Catholic. Then you have the band-hall which is very much Protestant, and the big-house would be seen as Catholic, although it's more mixed, the Errigle and the Pavilion would be more mixed, but I don't think they'd sit drinking together (Former resident).

It was clear that people had differing opinions as to how local bars were perceived. However, it also became apparent that regardless of perception, the majority of people felt confident and comfortable socialising in any bar close to or in Ballynafeigh. There was also very little evidence to suggest that any violent incidents, rows or drink related confrontations were based on sectarian attitudes or behaviour.

Other aspects of social mixing, such as shopping, were also discussed in an attempt to determine whether people used the local shops and whether their community background impacted on where they chose to shop. In Ballynafeigh, there was no evidence of community background being a factor in local shopping patterns:

I would use all shops …whatever is available…there is no difference (Resident).

There were different views on shopping patterns in the local area from older and younger residents. Those who had resided in the area for a number of years were more inclined to utilise the shops in the immediate area compared to younger people. Those that restricted their shopping to within Ballynafeigh felt that they were supporting their local economy, and saw it as an opportunity to catch up with old neighbours and friends:

The older generation would use the hairdressers, butchers, bakery and local stores…you always meet someone you know from the area and catch up on old times (Resident).

In recent years there have been significant changes in relation to the type of shops in the Ballynafeigh area and people's shopping patterns in general. Retailers have reacted to the demographic changes and developed shops, restaurants and bars that they feel reflect the diverse population in Ballynafeigh. To the younger population this appealed to their needs and lifestyles, but for older residents it caused frustration and did not reflect how they view Ballynafeigh:

It used to be a great road for people to shop on, ordinary people who could not afford much, or did not want to eat out all the time…it used to be a great wee road for all different variety of small shops, and they've taken the heart and soul out of it (Resident)

and,

The stuff that's on the road, Chinese restaurants, video shops it's all well and good for young people but it's not really what my generation would want. Two fish and chip shops, 3 Chinese restaurants and it's all geared towards the young professional, it's not geared for family now. We've got 2, 3 new pubs and the possibility of the old chapel up the road being turned into a wine-bar (Resident).

Several interviewees were of the opinion that the changes on the Ormeau Road had impacted on the opportunities people had to meet and interact:

People will also complain that there are no small shops – no localised shopping, less chance of people meeting. And the restaurants that are there are quite pricey…you know most local people couldn't afford to eat in the most of these restaurants (Local clergy).

In talks with estate agents in the area this change in shops was also highlighted:

Traditional services are not popular with young-professionals. They go to Tescos etc, they don't need a butcher's, they don't need a greengrocer's, they want a frappucino at 11 o'clock in the morning. You'll find small traditional ones dying out I suppose (Estate Agent).

Shopping patterns throughout Northern Ireland have changed in the last decade with the advent of large supermarkets and shopping centres. Time, cost and quality have become the significant factors in shaping people's shopping patterns. Within Ballynafeigh Dunne's Stores catered for large sections of the community and a few miles up the Saintfield Road was the Forestside shopping development. This has meant that a number of small shops within Ballynafeigh have been forced to close, hence limiting the opportunity for local people to mix. It was interesting to note that several respondents felt more positively about Dunne's than the Forestside development:

Although that Dunne's down by the library, although it's been renovated lately, it still has that local feel, and you know that locals are working there. You kind of still feel that you're supporting the community, I know that Dunne's is a big Irish company, but there's something about it you feel that you're supporting the local economy more than when you go to Sainsbury's (Resident).

Overall, most respondents felt that existing shops and cafes served the needs adequately of the Ballynafeigh community. The cosmopolitan feel to the Ormeau Road portrayed a diverse community where community background did not appear to be a significant factor in how people lived their lives through employment, socialising or shopping. However, how big an influence this environment was in facilitating interaction and mixing between residents of the area was difficult to determine. Several respondents felt that even though large sections of the local community passed through the area, few were concerned with establishing links or fostering relationships with people from their area.

Associations and Groups

Several respondents who were very active within the community felt that there was a low-level engagement in the various local clubs and associations from residents. Very few interviewees took an active interest in their local residents' group, and a direct consequence of this apathy towards the residents' groups is that some are considering disbanding due to a lack of support.

Members of a women's arts group and the local bowling club also referred to the low levels of involvement by local residents. The arts group felt that often an initial interest to take part did not extend to anything more. Attempts to get people more active often led to nothing. This was an experience shared by the bowling club, which had experienced a diminishing number of members, and they had difficulties in getting members to take a more active interest in the club. It is interesting to note that previous research in Ballynafeigh also noted the minimal level of local participation in local clubs and initiatives. Murtagh and Carmichael (2005) referred to the lower levels of social capital in Ballynafeigh compared to the rest of Northern Ireland, and highlighted the low levels of volunteering in local community projects or being on a management committee.

Although there are approximately 90 groups there seemed to be a relatively low level of engagement from residents. A glance at the clubs involved in the Ballynafeigh Community Development Association shows a variety of groups, such as AA, yoga and arts groups. Similarly, advertised in one of the local shops were activities such as a historical society, and arts and cultural exhibitions. The BCDA also provided facilities for a variety of groups in the area and in February 2006, there were 90 groups registered as users of the BCDA. These groups were of a diverse background, both cross-community groups and users groups, such as AA or Overeaters. One of the staff at the BCDA referred to the use of facilities by not only cross-community groups, but other groups as well, including ethnic minorities:

I've seen more even cultural groups coming through as well, so it's not just mixed in religion, there's an African group, different ones coming through, so it's good (Resident).

A closer analysis indicates that the changing demographics in the area may be in part responsible for the lack of participation in community groups and associations. It was apparent that older residents were more

inclined to be associated with group activities in Ballynafeigh compared to younger residents. Younger respondents revealed that they spent large parts of their leisure time outside the Ballynafeigh area, while people who had recently moved into the area had existing social ties in their previous communities and felt that it was important to continue with them.

Young People

Previous research has noted that there was limited mixing between young people from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds in the area, and that more adequate youth provision should be developed (Extern 2000). Until the late 1990s there were three youth clubs in the area: Deramore, Parkmore and Rosario; but only Rosario is still operating partly funded by the Belfast Education and Library Board. Discussions revealed that levels of youth provision in the immediate area were of concern to both adults and young people:

For years now Ballynafeigh has been forgotten about by the statutory organisations…there is no youth provision that is suitable for all the community (Resident).

There was one integrated school in the area. Forge Integrated Primary School had been in the area since 1993 and tended to be popular in the Ballynafeigh area, working closely with both the Clergy Fellowship and BCDA. Up until a few years ago the school had used a mini-bus to pick up pupils, but the numbers had recently dropped, and the bus stopped. According to the principal this could either mean that children made their own way to school, or, as hinted by the principal, that more and more children from Ballynafeigh attended the school.

There were also two playgroups/crèches in the area that supported children from the Ballynafeigh area. They were open to all young people regardless of community or ethnic background and this was reflected in the attendees:

There is a strong religious and cultural mix with children from Sri Lanka, Italy and Chinese children. In both cases there had been no problems as of yet regarding the mixed groups. Both of the crèches ran after-school clubs and there was an unofficial policy not allowing football tops. In one of the crèches' summer programme children were told that there are no football tops (Resident).

Staff at the BCDA indicated that there was not a structured and organised youth strategy in the Ballynafeigh area:

There's a big problem, BELB is in great difficulty, no-one is denying that and I mean, I know the worker on the ground and she's done huge amount of work too, with limited resources… our own youth provision is always under threat and it always seems to us that when we are just at the point when we have done the good work and building relationships we are always in crisis, you know, and that's the problem, short term funding and resourcing (BCDA representative).

The BELB worker understood where the criticism came from:

A lot of the community groups I work with would have a negative look on the BELB and BELB workers! So, it's quite hard for me to remain neutral in it. I think the fact they didn't have a worker in here until 2 years ago, I don't think they were meeting the needs of young people in here, they definitely weren't (Youth worker).

A number of measures have been developed to counterbalance the lack of youth provision in the area that has involved various local groups and leaders establishing a youth forum. This consists of church based youth workers, BELB workers and the Rosario Youth Club, and meets on a regular basis. All youth providers welcomed this initiative as it meant that the duplication of services was avoided, and it made it possible to share resources. One of the youth providers indicated that the forum had started as a way of combating duplication:

Let's get a group together with youth workers, who aren't really proactive within the community who are working with different classes of young people…let's get together and see what we can do together…made a lot more sense, and out of that came numerous projects which are still very successful (Youth worker).

There was a strong commitment from adults within the community to develop strategies and programmes for the local young people. There was also an awareness that there is a lack of facilities for young people and a realisation that a joined up approach is required to share resources and support the majority of young people.

Young People's Perceptions of Ballynafeigh

From the outset determining young people's perceptions of Ballynafeigh was difficult. At times their views changed from what they had been brought up to think to what they themselves had experienced. When

initially asked young people responded that Ballynafeigh was a mixed community where people got on regardless of their perceived or actual community background. However, this appeared to relate to their views of the adult population. For young people, the reality was very different:

Between the ages of say 13-17, life is very different…also there are certain groups that don't want to get on with each other (Young resident).

and,

Look people that say your religion doesn't matter in Ballynafeigh are wrong… it does and has major implications on what you can do and where you can go (Young resident).

It soon became apparent that young people viewed the area very differently to adults, and identified places within the community that they perceived as safe or dangerous. Territory was a significant factor for young people growing up in Ballynafeigh that affected mobility, appearance and also the use of facilities and amenities:

If you go past a certain area and you are a young Catholic then it is not safe…do you see behind the Wine Barrel there is a majority Protestant population…when we were younger it was a dangerous place to be if you were a young Catholic, we all have had friends who were 'jumped' around there because of their religion (Young resident).

It also became clear in talks with young people that certain areas were best avoided in some cases; one young Catholic woman felt she could not walk her friend to the door:

Because if I walked down, I would not be walking out again…sometimes all the fellas are hanging around and they would start it…you know it is like they have Fenian radars to identify all of us (Young resident).

and,

There are mainly Protestant parts of Ballynafeigh that we feel safe in…you don't go up past the Rosario youth club (Young resident).

There were small pockets of areas around the Annadale Flats that were marked out with Loyalist graffiti, such as UFF or UDA. Those young people that based themselves there did not venture down to the Ormeau Bridge or areas that they distinguished as Nationalist territory. There were

also interfaces, or informal boundaries/barriers where young people would and would not go (Hanlon, 1994). The young people were very determined to hold on to their territory and in some rare cases this led to confrontations between groups:

Dirty looks…start slabbering…sometimes a fight starts, fighting with fists…usually after Rangers-Celtic games (Young resident).

In most cases however confrontations were avoided, as the groups of young people would run away:

If they see you, they (the Catholics) would think there are more of you and they would run…if we see one of them we would also run…you don't know (Young resident).

There was an acknowledgement from both adults and young people that measures had been put in place to prevent incidents of violence between rival groups. However, several adults from the area acknowledged the need for a community relations programme for young people, which would support and build on such tentative approaches, but not which was from a youth club or school but originating in their world of the street. The programme must be innovative, one that the young people shape and form themselves in terms of their common needs and interests and it must be sufficiently long-term to enable relationships to become established over time.

Social Interaction

Previous research (Extern 2000; Hanlon 1994) highlighted the limited mixing among young people, particularly among young men, and the few places for young people to meet and mix. Research has also highlighted the strong perceptions among young people of particular venues and activities as being specifically for one community or the other. Young people perceived the area as being divided, with limited contact between the two groups of young people. Young people were also of the opinion that there were few or any places for young people to mix:

They [Protestants] used to come here…but there isn't anything recently…there is nowhere for groups to mix…there is no environment for people to come together (Young resident).

There was a perception that the Rosario Youth Club was Catholic orientated, although the club maintained that it was open to all young people from the

area. A group of young Protestant males also referred to not wanting to use the Rosario Youth Club, as it was seen to be mainly Catholic. When they had attended the club none of the Catholic young people had attended. A group of young Protestant men also made this point and referred to now being barred from attending Rosario Youth Club for fighting.

Among more senior residents in Ballynafeigh there was an awareness of the youth provision in the area as being 'divided' and as such there was no 'neutral venue' for young people to go, even outside of youth facilities:

Ormeau Park wouldn't be used by Catholic kids…the Catholics tend to congregate in Cherryvale…which is just on the Ravenhill Road and Protestants hang about around Blackwood Street in and around the Band hall…where Kimberley (Bar) used to be…what is known as Lower Ballynafeigh…there is/was sort of invisible interfaces…if they moved up as far as Sunnyside Street it was as far as they would come if they came any further it was seen as looking for trouble (Resident).

What materialised however was that rather than de facto segregated areas within Ballynafeigh among groups of young people, there was an element of perception playing a role, particularly with reference to the use of facilities and amenities:

It's not really that it's segregated it's more the perception that it's segregated, and Rosario is technically a youth-club for anybody, but in practical terms, Protestant kids won't go to it. It's the perception. It's not the fault of the leaders (Youth worker).

There have been a number of attempts to engage young people from different community backgrounds in the Ballynafeigh area but this has proved problematic. The difficulty of bringing groups of young people together was highlighted by the BCDA, which ran a summer scheme every year, in most cases in August:

Almost zero engagement when you get to July, I think, and then we run our summer scheme we deliberately do this by the end of July beginning of August to give young people the opportunity to rebuild bridges in their personal relationships, so whatever happens with regards to when we are working with them they still tend to be drawn by the tides what goes on around the marching season but we are very conscious that you know casually let that happen because the divisions and broken links that happens have to be rebuilt, they could remain of we don't help to mend them (BCDA representative).

The BCDA summer scheme was praised by one local resident:

BCDA run a brilliant summer scheme…they do mix, no problems, but in saying that, the older ones would not go near the summer scheme (Resident).

However, other attempts to bring young people together have not been as successful as the summer scheme. It was noted that a recent health project involving young people from Catholic and Protestant community backgrounds had to use two separate venues to run the project, as it was not possible for the young people to work together in the one environment.

Other attempts had also been made by Rosario Youth Club to work with groups of Protestants, and the club as such would welcome anyone to join. The attempts at bringing young Protestants had not been all that successful, even though a relationship had been build up with a group of Protestant young people, it led to young Catholics not going to the club when young Protestants were there. A youth worker at the club also recalled this series of events:

At one time we were just policing, it was a waste of time…once they were inside there were certain rules…Catholics were saying that Protestants were getting away with language and aggressive behaviour, cause they were unused to being in a centre…never been in a centre like this…they were what we called unclubables…cause their behaviour, cause we have to have certain rules they keep on breaking the rules and get excluded…they become more aggressive outside (Youth worker).

The experience of staff was therefore one of fatigue as a result of endless attempts to modify the behaviour of the groups of young people. There were however examples of groups of young people from both community backgrounds mixing. Groups of young women similarly seemed to be able to mix across community backgrounds more readily than young men. Youth providers made the point that young men in particular did not mix within the area as well as females:

Young women on the other hand are different and they do mix, they have their own crowds…within their groups there are both Catholics and Protestants…they have absolutely no hassle in mixing…they kind of cut across…and it has always been like that (Youth worker).

Another young Catholic female made the point about having a relationship with someone who had a Protestant community background:

It wouldn't bother me, but I would be worried about what their family would think…especially 'big brother'…it would be hard also if they were from the Ballynafeigh area, because then you would have to associate with their friends and that just wouldn't work, because of their views on Catholics (Young resident).

There were also groups of young women 'hanging out' with Protestant females, some of them involved in activities organised by the BELB. In some cases this friendship had also extended to activities outside of the BELB:

I know a few who have went to the bonfire on the 11th night, have went to see the bands on the 12th of July, and I heard the Protestant young women coaxing them to go, 'You'll be alright, you are with me', so they felt a wee bit dubious about it, but they went (Youth worker).

It also became clear that local sports clubs and associations attracted people from different community backgrounds. One local football club, Rosario FC, which was separated from the Rosario Youth Club, tended to attract young men from both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds.

Because you are all team mates…you cannot really fight with your team mates…you have to work together…and we would socialise outside of the team also…But you have to remember that the Protestants that are playing on the team are sensible, in that they are not slabbers…people that slabber to Catholics are not going to join a Catholic football team (Young resident).

Outside of sports clubs, there were also church groups and activities organised by local churches that involved a certain level of mixing. The Presbyterian Church at St John's, in Rosetta, worked actively with groups of young people from the various Protestant denominations as well as members of the local Catholic Churches on activities ranging from outdoor pursuits to concerts. Outside of these church activities, the various churches such as Cooke Centenary Presbyterian Church ran Brownie groups, which attracted both Catholic and Protestant young women, although the majority of participants were from a Catholic background.

The Interface

According to many respondents from the Protestant community the most obvious symbol in the area was the Ormeau Bridge. This was the dividing line between Lower Ormeau and Ballynafeigh, and has to be

understood in the context of the parade disputes that dominated the area throughout the 1990s (discussed in further detail below). Several respondents from a Protestant community background indicated that any sectarian trouble between Catholics and themselves would not occur within Ballynafeigh but instead around the bridge with people from the Lower Ormeau community:

The Protestants, the Loyalists in the area would see more conflict with the ones below the bridge than Catholics around them…it would always have been the bridge after the bookies massacre…their conflict would have been with them…there was never, very rarely a conflict between Catholics in Ballynafeigh and Protestants in Ballynafeigh (Resident).

Several Protestant respondents indicated that they rarely walked down the Lower Ormeau Road. They had been involved in numerous low-scale riots with their Catholic counterparts and used the bridge as the cut off point between two communities. The river was seen as the interface or natural 'peace line':

The two really aggressive sides are divided by a river…in some other areas maybe where there are riots, it's because they are living door-to-door (Resident).

It is interesting to note that large-scale violence between the two communities was rarely witnessed in the area. Granted there had been tensions and isolated incidents, but there was a general acceptance that interface violence on a scale like East or North Belfast was pointless:

Protestants here are not going to start violence, they would avoid it if they could…they would be quite vulnerable in fact…a lot of that die-hard thing has gone (Resident).

and,

There is not the number of people to sustain violence… that might be a contributing factor…they would have to come in from other areas…East Belfast and Belvoir (Resident)

Measures had also been put in place between Ballynafeigh and Lower Ormeau communities to prevent outbreaks of violence. These mechanisms along with a willingness between both communities to restrict the violence has resulted in an uneasy but effectual environment with no large-scale interface violence. The other interesting point to

make is that several Protestant respondents made clear distinctions between Catholics that reside in Ballynafeigh and those that live in the Lower Ormeau. It seems that if you live together in the one geographical space then you are very different from someone who lives in an area separated by an invisible 'peace wall' even though you share a similar community background.

Parading

As previously noted Ballynafeigh and the Lower Ormeau Road in the 1990s were synonymous with the parading dispute. Historically the Orange Order and Apprentice Boys had marched from Ballynafeigh Orange Hall across the Ormeau Bridge and passed on down the Lower Ormeau Road. However, gradually through the 1990s restrictions were placed on the parades until they were ultimately banned from passing down the Lower Ormeau Road. The legacy of what happened in the 1990s is still clearly evident today as interviews with those associated with parades has shown:

There is a Protestant community here and the Protestant community use the Ormeau Road everyday of their lives and that's the whole length of the Ormeau Road going into town centre, going to their doctors…or going to their work or social and recreation. But yet, suddenly when they put on a collarette they are no longer welcomed on certain parts of the Ormeau Road. So we would never give up that right that those people have a right to have free use of the Ormeau Road (Orange Order representative).

It was clear that the Orange Order was not happy with the re-routing of the march, but as such did not advocate protests:

But one has to move on…because we would take the view now that the parade issue is in the political arena (Orange Order representative).

Discussions with residents revealed that during the summer months throughout the 1990s, tensions had run high. Many would have expected the parades debate to have had major implications on relationships between those from the Catholic and Protestant community in Ballynafeigh. However, it was repeated on numerous occasions that the people from the community worked tirelessly and without rewards to strengthen internal community relations and distance the parades dispute from the people of Ballynafeigh.

There were mixed views on the impact that parading had within the local community. For an area that promotes itself as mixed, it was important

to determine whether there was a feeling of acceptance or toleration by the whole community towards parades. For several residents there was a feeling that the summer months were the only time during the year when trouble flared up in the area and also when the relationship between people from the two main community backgrounds could be affected. As one resident from a Catholic background put it:

This Catholic/Protestant issue only arrives around parades time…there are maybe some Protestant people I know that would normally speak to you during the year, but come June, July they sort of become a wee bit distant (Resident).

Another interviewee, who had been brought up in the area from a mixed community background and who had recently moved out, referred to how her husband had felt about the Twelfth.

Well from a personal point of view, it wasn't a big deal, yet for my partner who is a Catholic from a rural area, it was scary and alien to him and he didn't feel safe even on the Twelfth of July when all the flags were up in our street. It's the only street that the band actually march at, and he felt very, very intimidated, but it didn't do that to me, I would have brought the kids out to see the bands go by, I'm just more used to it (Former resident).

On the other hand there were a number of people from the Catholic community who felt that the parades had no impact on their lives and were used to the disruption during the summer months:

I mean our immediate street was quiet but we could hear helicopters and the bands etc. Now on the 11th I was up at a friend's house up the Saintfield Road a bit, and I walked down thinking it would be fine and all, and it was fine there was nothing, but it was just really dead, all the shops closed early I think. So, just a bit of a deadness I suppose, well and I would just prefer, just don't bother going out (Resident).

There were those that felt that the parades were more of a problem for Ballynafeigh from an economic perspective. Local traders and publicans felt that the area would often become abandoned with many local residents moving out of the area or going on holidays.

Yes, it does, we would find that one side of the community would stay out of the area during those times. Not significantly, down a bit, probably drop you about 10% maybe (Local trader).

and,

Everybody leaves…close, not because there is trouble, although there are heightened tensions on the road, there is never really any trouble on the streets…it is because everybody leaves…July is a write-off (Bar Owner).

According to several respondents in recent years there was a noticeable decline in the number of people from in and around Ballynafeigh coming out to watch the parades. According to the PSNI, the number of people turning out to watch the parade on the Twelfth had also decreased:

When I first came here in 1995 at that time you would have hundreds of people out supporting them…now somebody who would walk out of a shop would just stop and look at them…but you certainly wouldn't have that level of support (PSNI representative).

One member of the local Apprentice Boys made the point that the numbers of people watching had remained the same, but the problem was to get people to take part:

You still get good enough crowds considering the amount the Protestant community has dwindled in the area, you still get good crowds coming to watch the parades but in themselves the parades are dwindling in members and in support because of not being allowed to go through. It's the same scenario in the country, parades are under pressure and sort of dwindle a bit you know (Apprentice Boys member).

When the topic of parades is mentioned to residents of Ballynafeigh, they invariably refer to the disputes throughout the 1990s, and the re-routing of parades away from the Lower Ormeau community. At the time the dispute had the potential to irreversibly fragment the Ballynafeigh community and drive a permanent wedge between the local Catholic and Protestant communities. However, this was not the case and the work of community representatives, clergy and other parties cannot be underestimated.

Flags and Emblems

While conducting the fieldwork in the Ballynafeigh area, it was not hard to notice the Union Flags and red, white and blue bunting that were placed along the Ballynafeigh area of the Ormeau Road from June for the upcoming marching season. The main focal point for the flags and bunting is the Ballynafeigh Orange Hall. Discussions with the Orange Order revealed that the bunting is funded through their organisation.

It usually goes up for 2 months, the months of July and August because we have a system in this lodge with each lodge that meets here will pay a pound a month towards bunting. So whereas most country orange ones only put them up for 2 weeks and then it goes down we keep ours up till the end of August for the last parade which is the black parade on the last Saturday in August (Orange Order representative).

Apart from the bunting on the Ormeau Road, there were also some smaller streets within Ballynafeigh which had bunting put up, such as Walmer Street particularly in the vicinity of the band hall. This street also had a number of flags on display.

In relation to the flags on the Ormeau Road, it became apparent that these were not put up by the Orange Order, but instead by people from the local community associated with the bonfire. According to the PSNI, concerns about flags along the Ormeau Road had however become less and less of an issue:

In years gone by, we actually had basically a separate book in the enquiry office because we had so many complaints about flags…and that was just simply flags on the Ormeau Road…on the Twelfth of July period…nowadays it comes down to maybe 2-3 complaints and it is normally on the day they erect them…where they had rented a cherry picker to put the flags up…and people would ring and say, 'listen, they are doing this, and what is being done about it? (PSNI representative).

The PSNI argued that the reason for the number of flags having gone down was due to a changing attitude within the Loyalist community:

The Loyalist community as such, or those people representing the community they want to be seen to be reasonable…Now less and less of an issue, paramilitaries, main grouping, UDA/UFF, perhaps influence some years ago, this was at one time a fairly hard-line area, most of those people have actually moved away now…the centre of attraction for some years here was the Kimberley Bar…it attracted people, it was somewhere people could go to and obviously socialise with the same sort of views, but it brought people in from other areas (PSNI representative).

According to those residents responsible for putting up the flags on the Ormeau Road, this exercise was seen as being important as a way of identifying and marking out their territory. In talks with people involved in putting up the flags, there had been 'orders' from paramilitary groups about the length of time flags were allowed up:

At the end of the day…that's long enough, as long as we can get the flag up and celebrate for the period we want…happy days (Resident).

One elected representative made the point:

For a brief period, in the year, two months, eight weeks, if at the time is culturally significant, if you are talking a dozen and a half flags put up on the Ormeau Road last year…for the same for eight weeks, when it is culturally important to the Unionist community I think people should be prepared to tolerate that…not be offended by it. I certainly don't agree with flags being left up all year round to become tatty rags (Unionist politician).

There were however other, more critical voices, who saw the putting up of flags as being nothing more than a territorial issue. They felt that the increased tensions with the Lower Ormeau community meant that Protestants felt the need to mark out their area in Ballynafeigh and ignore the concerns of Catholics living in the area:

It is a territorial thing…we need to mark our territory and also put them up so the Catholics would not be able to get them flags down (Resident).

There was a degree of criticism from several respondents from the Nationalist community, who felt that the flags made them feel uncomfortable, and was not reflective of Ballynafeigh as a mixed community:

How can it be mixed when they put fucking flags up? (Resident).

Discussions with several Nationalist respondents touched on the flying of perceived Nationalist and Republican flags. It emerged that they had not seen any of these types of flags flying in Ballynafeigh, nor did they have the inclination to put them up. They felt that they would not be accepted in the community, and there was a danger in drawing attention to the fact they were Catholics:

I think everybody has a reason to celebrate it but at the same time when the Gaelic and the GAA's going, how would people feel about that if the flags were coming out? I would say some people would have a fear because you're basically letting everybody know what side you're from (Resident).

The majority of respondents tolerated the flying of Unionist flags during the marching season, as long as they were placed in moderation and came down after the allotted time that had been agreed within the community.

The Bonfire

Bonfires on the Eleventh of July are associated with the Protestant culture and there has been one at Annadale for as long as people can remember. Older residents referred to the bonfires before the Troubles as attracting both Catholics and Protestants:

Everybody went to the bonfire, everybody, all the kids collected wood, I collected wood too because it was just a bonfire. Every district sort of had their own bonfire you know, and there was a field on a waste bit of ground and our bonfire was there. A few streets away in Whitehall they had their own up at the wall at the hospital there. There was one on the Ormeau Road at Somerset Street, the bands, we used to just all go out and watch the bands (Youth worker).

References were also made to Catholics in the area attending the bonfires and the parades, as it was a 'day out for everybody':

There was always a bonfire at bottom of the street…and any Catholics who lived on the street never objected to it because as they would have perceived it as 'it has always been there' …there was no point in changing something that wasn't causing the majority of people up here any indifference, so it was just left...and Catholics and Protestants got on in this street (Resident).

In 2004 the only remaining bonfire in Ballynafeigh at Annadale Flats attracted great media attention when it was perceived to be one of the worst maintained sites in Belfast, if not in Northern Ireland. In 2005, the bonfire committee applied for and was awarded a bonfire grant from the Belfast City Council to cover activities around the bonfire and also to make sure the site was tidy. This involved the council transporting away garbage and the erection of a fence around the site so as to avoid fly tipping. Together with Groundwork Northern Ireland, the bonfire committee also attempted to make the bonfire more inclusive.

We have had a couple like [Catholics]…but that just been sort of mates…not a social thing for the Catholics to come down…yet…I would like to see it…I would like to see vice-versa, Protestants start supporting St Patrick's day…this would be a cracking wee place, see if we just got over the last 30 years (Resident).

Other residents were of the opinion that the bonfire needed to be more inclusive and open to everyone and were therefore critical of the very Protestant nature of the bonfire:

I don't mind the bonfires to be honest with you, but I just wish there was more restrictions in tidying it up, but I know that they're going along with it now. But the scale of the bonfire, brings the area down, but I know there's plans afoot to keep it more regulated which I think is pretty important for the culture, I think it should be kept, but just managed in a different way, you know and it could come about that everyone is invited to it (Resident).

A former resident from a mixed background referred to the bonfire being the highlight of the year when she grew up, but found it hard being in a mixed marriage herself to get her husband to join her:

Even bringing up our two children, that was very difficult, because I wanted them to be at the bonfire, I wanted them to watch the bands but he wasn't very happy about it. He, point blank, wouldn't go to the bonfire (Former resident).

There was also a sense among interviewees that the bonfire was something that would continue to have a presence in the area. What also became clear was that during the bonfire season, young Protestant males were heavily involved in the building and maintenance of the bonfire. This also meant that the area around the bonfire, the Annadale flats turned into a no-go area for young Catholics:

Best time of the f-ing year…its summer…never see any of them [Young Protestants] about…they are all down the bonfire…you would get kicked to death…couldn't care less about bonfire…it's their territory (Resident).

The bonfire was also seen as being of importance to the group of young Protestants, signifying a manifestation of their culture. They were also adamant that there would always be a bonfire in Ballynafeigh, and the fact that part of the bonfire involved the burning of an Irish tricolour did not make much of a difference.

Summary

There was a general consensus that Ballynafeigh was a mixed area, with large numbers of people from the Protestant and Catholic communities and a growing ethnic minority community residing in the area. However, it soon materialised that within Ballynafeigh there were streets which were perceived to be predominantly Catholic or Protestant, as well as those regarded as mixed.

The majority of local residents were keen to stress that their community was mixed, but found it more difficult to determine how integrated it

was. Several residents referred to the area as being fully integrated whereas others tended to see Ballynafeigh as a place where Catholics and Protestants lived side by side but had limited, if any, form of interaction.

One of the key issues facing the area was the process of gentrification. References were often made to the increased house prices in the Ballynafeigh area as well as the increase in HMOs. According to developers house prices should continue to rise in the area because of its desirability, but this also leads to local residents being priced out of the market. There was also a fear that instead of families moving into the area, young professionals and single-person households now populated Ballynafeigh, a situation which was not likely to change with the development of luxury apartments, such as the ones in the old Ormeau Bakery. Subsequently, this recent change in demographics and building developments was impacting on the ability for people to form relationships and integrate as a community in shared spaces.

Even though the tension in the area in the aftermath of the marching issue in the mid-1990s had somewhat subsided, there was among some of the residents a sense that there was still tension between the Lower Ormeau Road and Protestants in Ballynafeigh. The tension within Ballynafeigh tended to flare up on occasions around the Twelfth of July but as such it was nothing on the scale experienced elsewhere in Northern Ireland or in Belfast. Some of the interviewees referred to a sense of unease around the Twelfth and particularly the bonfire, others just referred to the area being quiet. Very few, if any, of the interviewees referred to a sense of unease about walking around in the area or the relationship between Catholics and Protestant deteriorating within the area.

There were conflicting views on topics relating to flags and the bonfire. In some cases people were critical of the flags being allowed, others were more pragmatic. Among the group of people who put the flags up there was a sense that this was important as a manifestation of a Protestant culture and this was just something for people moving into the area to accept. There had however been some accommodation in that flags were only put up during the summer. Regarding the bonfire, an attempt had been made in 2005 to restrict the amount of fly dumping and also to make it more inclusive.

The sense of tension and unease was most often referred to by groups of young people, in most cases young males. According to some young people it was not safe to hang out in certain areas. According to them

mixing between young Catholics and Protestants was limited. They complained about the lack of a 'shared space' where people could go and feel safe regardless of their community background.

There were however exceptions to this, the youth providers in the area sought actively to work with young people and encouraged them to mix. This had for example led to groups of young women mixing outside of the organised activities and being able to transcend the 'invisible interfaces' in Ballynafeigh. Young people who partook in sports such as football referred to colleagues from a different religion and that this friendship continued outside of football. In other cases young people also mixed in local church groups or in the integrated school in the area.

Chapter Three
Areema

Areema is the last local public housing estate to be home to significant numbers of Protestants and Catholics (Andersonstown News, 14th December, 2002)

Areema is a relatively small residential estate located between the predominantly Protestant/unionist Dunmurry village and Seymour Hill estates to the south, and the predominantly Catholic/nationalist Twinbrook and Poleglass estates to the north. There has been a long-term perception within the wider population that it is a mixed residential estate. It is situated in the electoral ward of Dunmurry Cross, and within the boundaries of Lisburn City Council.

The Areema estate contains 136 houses and 6 blocks of flats, and was originally built in 1964, prior to the onset of the Troubles, and before the building of the Twinbrook and Poleglass estates in the early 1970's. The estate when originally built was entirely social housing. This has progressively changed over the years to the area becoming predominantly owner-occupied (59%), and the Housing Executive's stock in the area has dwindled from originally over 200 properties to 80 at present.

Perceptions of Areema

A number of discussions focused on local residents views of the Areema area in terms of it being a mixed community. It became apparent that there was a degree of confusion about what constituted a mixed area. People found it difficult to confirm whether the area was mixed or what defined a mixed community. Several interviewees perceived that the area was mixed, while others referred to the area being one in transition from 'orange' to 'green'. There had been a significant change in the demographics in the area over the last twenty years and for many local residents this had impacted on how they now perceived their area. Table 6 indicates respondents' perceptions of Areema by their community background.

Table 6: Do you perceive Areema to be?

	Mixed (%)	Mostly Catholic (%)	Don't know (%)
Protestant	53	40	7
Catholic	70	23	7
Mixed	50	50	0

The majority of respondents from the survey perceive Areema to be a mixed area (59%), but Catholic respondents were more likely to perceive the area as mixed (70%), than either Protestant respondents (53%) or respondents from a mixed community background (50%). In contrast, respondents from a Protestant community background (40%) and a mixed community background (50%) were more likely to see the area as mostly Catholic than their Catholic neighbours (23%). Not one respondent believed that the area was mostly Protestant

The majority of those interviewed stated that the area had been predominantly Protestant when it was originally built, with a small number of Catholic families and with a strong tradition of housing mixed relationship couples. One interviewee who had lived in the area for over three decades referred to how the area had changed over time:

It wasn't as mixed then, when I was growing up, actually it's not even that mixed now to be honest. I mean I'd say it would be more Catholic than Protestant in here now, years ago it would have been more Protestant, it's sort of shifted the other way (Resident).

Similarly another resident was unsure as to how mixed the area actually was, and felt that it was an area that had undergone significant demographic changes, particularly over recent years:

I think it's already more Catholic than it is Protestant and I think it might continue to go that way. I think there are a lot of Catholics who would like to move into the area (Resident).

It was not only residents who outlined how the make up of the area had changed over the years, as the PSNI acknowledged that the Catholic population of the area had increased over the last two decades:

Twenty years ago the area used to be predominantly Protestant. There always was a number of Catholic families in there, so it's now totally turned on its head where it's predominantly Catholic (PSNI representative).

Several of those interviewed were of the opinion that the area in the beginning, given the proximity to the local police station, had been home to a significant number of security forces personnel. However, with the outbreak of the Troubles in 1969, and the building of the nationalist Twinbrook and Poleglass estates in the early 1970s it was suggested that this situation changed:

There used to be policemen and UDR men living in the area at the start of the conflict, and then it progressively changed because of West Belfast (Nationalist politician).

Both Nationalist and Unionist political representatives agreed that the area had become more Catholic over the years, but were however divided as to why this demographic change had taken place. A Unionist representative spoke of acts of intimidation against Protestants leading to people moving out of the area. However, aside from one or two anecdotal tales, the research found no evidence to support this. On the other hand, a Nationalist politician suggested that the increase in the Catholic population of the area was to be expected given the close proximity to West Belfast and the huge demand that exists there for housing:

It was a Protestant estate in an interface area. They were getting a lot of hassle, trouble, and a lot of them moved out and basically that's it (Unionist politician).

and,

I suppose you could describe it as a lot of Protestants have moved out of the area, and a lot of Catholics have moved in. Possibly I think one of the reason's why it's happened is because of the shortage of housing in West Belfast (Nationalist politician).

Despite many interviewees referring to the area as one containing a changing mixed population and being in transition from 'orange' to 'green', other respondents were keen to stress that they perceived the area to be mixed, and that this was a key factor in deciding to move into the area:

The fact that it was mixed was very much a factor in me deciding to move here (Resident).

Several interviewees spoke of how they had moved out of predominantly single identity estates to live in what they perceived to be a mixed area and this was particularly the case among people in a mixed relationship.

One interviewee referred to the area as something of a 'safe-haven' for couples in mixed relationships, who perhaps felt that they could not live safely in an area dominated by one community. There was a perception that they would be safer in a mixed environment:

A mixed area suits a mixed couple because they can't go to either, especially if you are in a mixed marriage and bringing up kids. It is a handy area if you are in a mixed marriage or anything (Resident).

It was often said that the main reason for moving to the area, was 'for the kids', as they felt that the area provided the best opportunity for their children to grow up in a safe and neutral environment. There was a tangible sense that they wanted their children to meet children from a different community background than their own, and the perception of Areema as being a mixed area was associated with a safer area in which to raise children due to its lack of a paramilitary presence:

I hoped to have my kids grow up in an area that was mixed, there's less bigotry (Resident).

Respondents who had resided in the area for several years noted that there had never been a paramilitary presence within the estate. It was not known to house supporters of paramilitary organisations or display symbols or signs supporting these groups.

It was interesting to note that several interviews associated a link between the length of residency and community background. There was a perception that the majority of Protestant residents in the area would be older residents, who had been living in the estate since it was built, and any new residents were more likely from the Catholic community:

I'd say most Protestants in the area would have been here since the start (Resident).

All interviewees without exception and regardless of community background hoped that the estate would remain mixed in the future. However many of those interviewed expressed a concern that if current demographic trends continued, the balance of the mix would decrease, and the area would be in danger of becoming another single-identity area. One resident stated that although the area was mixed at present, they could only see the area becoming increasingly Catholic in the future:

I would like it to stay mixed, a lot of people here like the fact that it's mixed…this area won't be mixed in 5, 10, 15 years time (Resident).

There was no doubt that Areema had undergone significant changes in its demographics in recent years. However, there continued to be a strong view that the area was mixed, but had potential to become less mixed and more segregated in the coming years. Local residents identified a number of factors that they felt highlighted the recent demographic changes in the area, and reinforced the perception that the area had a growing Nationalist population.

Changing Population

Despite the widely reported demographic changes that were claimed to have taken place in the area, there was a lack of reliable statistical or Census data to support any such change in demographics. This was mainly due to the small size of Areema, and also because of overlapping three census output areas relating to the 2001 Census data. Therefore aside from the survey results, it is difficult to statistically support the view that the area has changed demographically from a Protestant majority to a Catholic majority. Table 7 highlights how long respondents have lived in Areema by their community background. The figures reveal that a third of Catholic respondents had moved into the area in the last five years, compared to only 3% of Protestant residents, while almost half (48%) of Protestant residents had always lived in the area, while no Catholic respondents had.

Table 7: How long have you lived in Areema?

	< year	1-5 years	6-10 years	11 years or more	Always
Protestant	0	3	3	45	48
Catholic	9	33	36	22	0
Mixed	14	18	18	27	22

In total, 76% of those residents who had moved into the area in the last 1-5 years, were from a Catholic community background, 18% from a mixed community background, and 3% from a Protestant background, which would certainly indicate that the demographic mix of the area may decrease in future and the area's status as a mixed community may be under threat. However, the fact that 22% of residents from a mixed community background had always lived in the area, and the fact that 18% of residents from a mixed background have moved into the area in

the last 1-5 years seems to support the views of several residents that there has always been a mix of some form or another.

Changing Politics

While accurate statistical data is not available, the demographic changes may be illustrated by the decline in the visibility of Unionist election paraphernalia, and the decision of Sinn Féin in 1997 to canvass in the area for the first time for the Westminster and local government elections. One nationalist politician attributed this development to the changing political climate after the 1994 cessations of violence and subsequent peace process initiatives:

Republicans never really canvassed in that area up to 1997. They never done any, it was still viewed that it would be too dangerous (Nationalist politician).

A Unionist politician referred to his electoral support in the area suffering at around the same time that Sinn Féin began to canvass in the area. Previously, Unionists had regarded the area as something of a 'safe seat':

In fact at the Assembly election in 1998 when I canvassed there, it reflected the change in demographics there you know. It used to be that I would have had quite a sizeable vote there in Areema Drive, then after that because of the change in demographics that changed (Unionist politician).

The decline in the visibility of Unionist election paraphernalia was recalled by one resident as signalling a change in the area's demographic make up in the last ten years:

You used to see James Molyneaux (former UUP leader) down here, even the DUP. Now Sinn Féin put out leaflets, I even remember seeing Gerry Adams at one point (Resident).

According to several interviewees, in 2005 a mural depicting an IRA volunteer was painted on a gable wall in the area. The mural was soon removed after objections from residents from all community backgrounds, as it presented a visible threat to their status as a mixed community. However, this event and the presence of Sinn Féin post-1997 are visible examples reflecting the demographic changes that have been reported as having taken place in the area.

Furthermore, several Protestant residents felt that one particularly key factor signifying the demographic change that they believed had taken place in the

area was the occasional use of the Community Restorative Justice project from Twinbrook by some residents. The CRJ no longer operate on an official basis in the Areema area, but have been reportedly called in from time to time by some local residents. Several of those interviewed saw this as alienating some within the Protestant community and reported a level of unease among some of their neighbours regarding the use of the CRJ:

It alienates some people. Why can they not use the police? (Resident).

and,

I know quite a few neighbours who aren't happy about that (Resident).

Flags

According to several residents in recent years there had been a noticeable drop in the number of flags outside homes during the month of July. While more recent residents and the PSNI reported that to their knowledge, *'I never recall seeing any flags, either unionist or nationalist'* (PSNI), longer term residents who had lived in the area for at least twenty years recall that some residents used to fly a Union Jack out of their window during the Twelfth fortnight. One interviewee who used to fly a flag from the house stated:

Years ago I put a flag out, then it got to the point where they were coming and pulling it down. I'd be wary of doing it now, you'd feel that you might be stoned (Resident).

and,

There used to be flags and bunting up in the area, you wouldn't see that now (Resident).

To some local residents, the practice of flying flags ended when they felt that Protestants were becoming a minority in the area and felt that it would not be safe. However, several others felt that 'cultural neutrality' was a positive development and enhanced the sense of a mixed environment.

Bonfire

Discussions revealed that the Eleventh night bonfire in Areema stopped around 9 or 10 years ago, however there were differences in opinion as to the effects that the bonfire had on community relations within the area:

Years ago you would have had a bonfire in here, over by the park, but they haven't had a bonfire in years (Resident).

The PSNI suggested that the bonfire increased tension in the area, and trouble would often break out between rival youths who were not necessarily from the Areema area:

There used to be (a bonfire), and it used to be a bone of contention, because then around that period tension would hot up and the riots would take place (PSNI representative).

However, another interviewee from a Nationalist background indicated how the nature of the bonfire had changed over the years, with it becoming more of an inclusive event, with some attempts made to incorporate everyone from the local community, regardless of community background:

The first year I was here there was a bit of a bonfire, a barbeque for the whole community, orange and green, so they did make an effort (Resident).

Alongside the lack of agreement as to the impact of the bonfire on relations within the area, there also appeared to be no consensus as to why the bonfire stopped when it did. One resident was of the view that the bonfire was stopped as Protestants felt they were becoming a minority and lacked the 'critical mass' to sustain it, while another resident felt that the bonfire simply ended as people went to see the much larger bonfire in the neighbouring village:

Up until about 10 years ago we had a bonfire in here, but then they stopped it because it started going Catholic, with younger ones moving in, and there was no one to collect wood (Resident).

and,

I think because the big one (bonfire) was down in Dunmurry, people thought they would go down there instead (Resident)

There was no definitive answer as to why the bonfire stopped in Areema. It may have been that local residents felt that it was not really an appropriate activity for a mixed area, or the changing demographics meant that larger numbers of Nationalists simply did not want the bonfire in their area, or Protestants stopped collecting materials and went to bigger bonfire sites in other areas.

Despite the lack of reliable statistical census data, the overwhelming consensus in interviews with residents, local politicians and voluntary and statutory organisations was that the area had become increasingly Catholic/Nationalist in recent years. This is not to say that the area has become segregated and is dominated by those from one particular community background. However, it does present the view that the area is in transition and has the potential to become less integrated and mixed.

Relationships

Several residents from a Nationalist background said that even in the short time that they had lived in the area, there had been a noticeable change in the area's demographics, and they felt that if the Catholic proportion of the Areema population kept on increasing at the same rate, it would be detrimental to the area's ability to sustain itself as a mixed community, and Protestants in the area would feel out-numbered:

It will turn out that the minority community will feel scared in here; I think that's already happening (Resident).

There was a sense that at present Protestant residents were happy to continue to live in the area, but that they may have to reconsider their position in the area should the estate continue to go 'green', as they would feel like a "threatened minority" where perhaps their safety could not be guaranteed:

I wouldn't stay here if it was mainly Catholic, I wouldn't feel comfortable (Resident).

There were a number of divergent views on how relations should be conducted between people from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds in the area. Some residents openly stated that a mixed area should not be affiliated with one side or the other, and thus a sense of tolerance and cultural neutrality was central to the survival of any mixed estate, including their own. This therefore explained the haste with which residents from all sides urged for the removal of a Republican mural. Good relations among the community appeared to be maintained through neutrality and not diversity:

Mixed areas should be neutral in every sense of the word, so it shouldn't be marking out territory with flags and stuff like that there (Nationalist politician).

However, discussions with several Unionist residents revealed that some believed they were no longer free to visibly express what they perceived to be their cultural identity, in what many felt had increasingly become a predominantly Catholic area. The concept of cultural neutrality was passively accepted due to the changing demographics, rather than embraced as an inherent need in a mixed community.

To feel comfortable you'd have to go somewhere else (Resident).

Similarly, several Nationalist interviewees stated that they would not feel particularly safe in the area if they visibly identified themselves as Nationalist by hanging the Irish tricolour or GAA flags from their house:

I wouldn't feel safe putting up a tricolour…I came here from Andersonstown and used to hang a flag out for Easter, but I stopped it though. I could have invited a hell of a lot of shit for it (Resident).

Cultural manifestations such as flags, murals and bonfires were no longer visible in the area and the changing demographics appear to have relegated the expression of culture from the public to the private sphere. For some interviewees this was so as not to identify themselves as being from one background or another, for others it was so as not to offend people from a different community background:

People let people get on with their culture in their own home (Resident).

and,

You know you have to live and let live. They don't ram their religion down our throats (Resident).

One main theme emanating from interviewees was that cultural practices had changed in the area as the demographics had changed. There appeared to be a sense of fear around displaying one's community background publicly. Several of those interviewed saw the lack of public displays of cultural affiliation as a positive development as it promoted tolerance, while some respondents felt that with this was a sense of a loss of cultural expression. Residents also reported that the demographic changes in the area over the years had affected relationships between individuals in the area and altered the sense of 'community spirit'.

Social Integration

One recurring theme was how the level of interaction with neighbours had changed over the years, with many residents saying that in years gone by they knew many more people in the area. Several interviewees reported a 'loss of community spirit' and a general apathy towards community initiatives. The discussions revealed that community background and perceptions of the area's becoming 'greener' were not significant factors in the minimal interaction within the community. It was more the changing demographics and high turnover of families coming into and out of the area that was inhibiting the forming of relationships.

Discussions with Lisburn City Council, the Housing Executive, and local residents revealed that the area had a high turnover of housing in what had become a very desirable area to live in, with houses often selling within two weeks of going on the market. A Social Exclusion Unit Paper (1998) argued that a high turnover of property was 'a key factor in decline' of social capital, in that it upsets the social balance and could be a key factor in the declining sense of community in the area. This would appear to support the general feeling emanating from interviews of not knowing who lived in the area as much as before, and the feeling that 'people get up go to work, come home and you hardly ever see them'. Many respondents sensed an increase in individualism at the expense of a 'sense of community':

You don't know as many people as you used to. I mean years ago, you knew everybody, and there's a lot moving in who keep themselves to themselves and don't want to know you (Resident).

One interviewee referred to a feeling that in the past 'people went out of their way for you', and contrasted this with a sense of indifference now towards neighbours in the area. Another resident even suggested that such trivial gestures as going into the neighbour's house for a cup of tea didn't really happen anymore. There was a sense of not knowing many neighbours, even for those residents who had lived in the area for decades:

I could walk past people now who I didn't know, and I've lived here for 32 years (Resident).

and,

I used to know nearly everybody here years ago, whereas there are an awful lot of people I wouldn't know now (Resident).

Many interviewees referred to being 'friendly' with someone without knowing them well at all. This was a relatively new development, one that has increased with the changing demographics. One resident however felt that this had always been the case for the twelve years they had been in the area, and was keen to stress that even with the best intentions relations did not run very deep:

I'm friendly enough with the neighbours. I do the hedges for an elderly widow, but aside from that there is not much contact and never really has been. I keep myself to myself, and I'm too busy (Resident).

The vast majority of residents interviewed referred to the amicable relations they had with their neighbours at a very basic level of interaction, such as saying hello or waving to one another. This perception was also evident in the survey findings where the majority of respondents indicated that saying hello was their only interaction with a neighbour (Table 8).

Table 8: How well do you know your neighbours?

	% of respondents
Just to say hello	85
Mind one another's house	44
Socialise	21
Mind kids	4
Never bother	3

This reported decline in social interaction in the area led many respondents to suggest that their relations with neighbours were fine at a very basic level of interaction, with 85% of neighbours for example waving to one another, but only 21% of respondents suggested that they socialised with their neighbours, indicating that despite a general level of friendliness towards one another levels of social interaction were limited to a basic level of contact. However, the predominant view was that this was often as far as neighbourly interaction went:

I know one of my neighbours. The rest I'd wave to and say hello to, but I wouldn't know their names now (Resident).

and,

It's changed a lot. I knew people better then than I do now, I couldn't even tell you the girl next door's surname now (Resident).

A key theme that emerged was that the community background of neighbours was unimportant in relationship building, and not to be linked to the reported decline in social interaction. Rather it appeared that a significant number of residents were not aware of the community background of their neighbours nor felt the need to know. This also became apparent through the survey findings where one fifth of respondents did not know their friends' community background (Table 9).

Table 9: How many friends of the same community background in Areema?

	% of respondents
Some	26
Don't know	20
Socialise outside area	17
Most	16
Half	10
All	6
None	3

The relative unimportance of community background in determining residents' relations with one another is evident by the fact that one-fifth (20%) of respondents were unaware of the community background of their friends in the area, while only 6% of respondents stated that all of their friends in the area were from the same community background as themselves.

One interviewee spoke of how community background was not discussed with friends or neighbours, as it was not an issue. This could perhaps be said to be linked to the feeling of cultural neutrality, with political issues and differences remaining private affairs:

There are quite a lot of mixed marriages in the area. The couple next door to me are mixed marriage, and I only found out last week and they have lived here for several years (Resident)

Local residents acknowledged that not knowing their neighbours was impacting on the level of integration, mixing and overall sense of community within Areema. This limited contact with neighbours was not associated with perceived community background, but more to do with limited opportunities to meet and interact.

Shared Spaces

A major theme emerging from discussions with local residents was the distinct lack of any type of facilities in the Areema area itself. This is mainly due to the small size of the area and the population compared to neighbouring areas of Seymour Hill, Dunmurry and Twinbrook. The lack of facilities necessitates that local residents travel outside of the area to surrounding locations to access facilities. The majority of interviewees suggested that this was problematic when one considers that the immediate areas surrounding Areema are predominantly single identity communities.

In terms of shopping, community background did not appear to be a factor influencing where people did their shopping. It appeared that shopping patterns were based on what goods were needed rather than any concerns over the location of the store. Several residents felt that where they did their shopping was not an issue due to the fact that it took place during the day, and suggested that difficulties in accessing social facilities at night were a different matter:

I would shop anywhere depending on what I have to get (Resident).

According to one resident, in the past shopping in the local stores used to lead to a lot of contact with other residents, but that even this was not as prevalent as in the past as shopping patterns began to expand beyond the nearby Dunmurry area:

You used to go for bread and milk, and end up chatting for an hour. That doesn't happen any more (Resident).

With the expansion of public transport and more people driving their own vehicles, people have become less reliant on small local shops. What was historically an excellent opportunity for people to integrate and 'catch up' has diminished, with people reducing their main shopping to weekly trips to the large supermarkets, although it was interesting to note that older respondents when the opportunity arose, were more likely to support their local shops than the large supermarkets.

A common perception among adult respondents was that the two closest public houses located outside of the area were affiliated with one community or the other. The Motte 'n Bailey the closest bar was perceived to be predominantly Nationalist, while the Dunmurry Inn was perceived to be predominantly Unionist. One interviewee outlined the

difficulties this presented for people in socialising with friends from a different community background than their own, and said that locations for social mixing in a 'neutral' environment were few and far between.

In discussions with Protestant residents however it became apparent that the vast majority would not go to the Dunmurry Inn either, as it was perceived as being a bar frequented by Loyalist paramilitary sympathisers. The bar appeared to be reasonably off limits for most residents of Areema:

A Nationalist wouldn't go through the door in the Dunmurry Inn (Resident).

and,

I mean I wouldn't even go into the Dunmurry Inn. Basically you have the Dunmurry Inn, which is Protestant and the Motte 'n Bailey is Catholic (Resident).

The perceived lack of a shared space where all people would feel comfortable invariably led to local residents usually travelling further afield to socialise and access facilities. Some residents spoke of going to Finaghy, Lisburn or even to Belfast city centre:

I'd say a lot of people would go to Belfast to socialise. I would go there or even Andersonstown (Resident).

The majority of interviewees felt that people in the area would choose where to socialise in the immediate area mainly on their community background, and where safety was paramount. A common perception was that this would reduce the chances for mixing between members of the local Unionist and Nationalist communities:

I could see people going to pubs apart, there's nowhere in here to go (Resident).

There was a general consensus from interviewees that they had limited opportunities to get to know other residents in the area due to the lack of a suitable nearby venue where all residents would feel comfortable. This view was summed up by one resident who indicated that:

Residents use Areema as a base camp, you hardly ever see them (Resident).

The knock on affect was that Areema residents were pursuing different activities in different areas without interacting with other Areema

residents. Discussions focused on any other activities or events that occurred within Areema that may facilitate relationship building. One resident highlighted the role that the summer festival played in giving people an opportunity to meet and get to know one another. Large sections of the local community participate in this festival, and it was often repeated that it was unfortunate that there were not more events such as this where the whole community could take part:

A lot of people attend, and it's great for the young ones. Everyone mixes, regardless of your background. If only there was more things like it (Resident).

There was relative consensus that the lack of facilities in the area itself reduced the chances to meet other people from the area, and interviewees invariably felt that residents often ended up living separate lives with little opportunity for contact with others.

Inter-Community Relationships

The demographic and social changes which were reported to have taken place in the area not only affected relationships between residents of Areema and their declining levels of social interaction with one another, but also affected relations between Areema and the surrounding areas, Dunmurry, Seymour Hill and Twinbrook:

They are literally a stones throw away from Twinbrook, Poleglass, and Seymour Hill, they are a unique kind of mixed area within a predominantly Protestant area, but bordering on nationalist dominated areas (Lisburn Council representative).

A particularly key issue in the context of Areema is its geographic location. Several interviewees referred to the area occupying what could be broadly termed to be an interface area between several single identity estates. One local politician spoke of the difficulties sometimes encountered by Areema's close location to predominantly single identity communities:

Areema is stuck in the middle ground between Poleglass and Seymour Hill and quite often they find Areema the middle ground (Nationalist politician).

The location of Areema between the large single identity estates of the Nationalist Twinbrook/Poleglass and Unionist Dunmurry/Seymour Hill areas has, according to a number of interviewees, intermittently led to the area becoming an interface between rival groups, particularly where the area meets Dunmurry village.

This rather stark and often crude territorial division is perhaps best illustrated by the graffiti at Dunmurry train station. The graffiti on the Dunmurry side at times is pro-Unionist/Loyalist, and on the other side closest to Areema can be pro-Nationalist/Republican.

Perceptions within Dunmurry

In interviews with representatives from Dunmurry, Areema was perceived as 'green', and they were fearful of the expansion of Nationalists from West Belfast into Dunmurry and Lisburn:

Well for so long the Protestant community deems Dunmurry village to be their area and they feel that the Nationalists are encroaching on their environment (Community worker).

One interviewee added that from the perspective of some Unionists in the areas around Areema the increase in the Catholic population of the area leads them to believe that this is an *'encroachment'* on *'their'* territory by an ever-expanding West Belfast, and added that there was the possibility of the wider area becoming a huge interface type place *'like Suffolk or Cluan Place'.*

Another Dunmurry interviewee echoed arguments forwarded by several residents; and said that one reason for this perception that Areema *'was now a nationalist estate'*, was the use of CRJ by some individuals in Areema:

Another one of our fears is that these community watch or CRJ within Twinbrook and in Areema, I think maybe they run things from Twinbrook (Dunmurry resident).

Further discussions with interviewees from Dunmurry revealed a sense that Protestants living in Areema would be disenchanted with the expansion of Nationalists from West Belfast and alienated by the use of CRJ and the action of Sinn Féin within their local community.

Perceptions within Seymour Hill

The PSNI said that in conversations with Seymour Hill residents (a Unionist/loyalist estate to the south of Areema), the fear of an expansion of the population of West Belfast was certainly an issue, and conceded that the area in the future may develop into a contentious interface:

The analogy might be that the Loyalists see themselves as some sort of King Canute trying to keep back the green tide (PSNI representative).

and,

I view Areema as sort of the last stand, if it swings to becoming a totally Catholic community; it's another peace-line, because Seymour Hill residents are going to feel very threatened (PSNI representative).

There was also a belief that as tensions increased and local Protestant people became more alienated with the expansion of West Belfast, Areema was an example of a mixed community becoming dominated by Nationalists, where paramilitary organisations would have an opportunity to increase their influence within communities. This sense of threat or being under siege, as perceived by both communities makes it problematic for mediators to attempt to negotiate a deal to resolve certain disputes, particularly between the months of the summer marching season.

Perceptions within Areema

The feeling of being *'caught in the middle'* between two predominantly single identity areas was a common theme throughout discussions with local residents, particularly during times of tension throughout the province. Most recently, several residents referred to the Whiterock riots of September 2005 that reportedly led to violence between people from Twinbrook and Seymour Hill in the children's playground in Areema. There was an acceptance from local residents that outside events can have a major impact on relationships within the Areema community:

There can be some tensions with other areas, people sent word up that they were coming up to turn the electric off, and they were going to sort out Areema, it made everybody nervous (Resident).

At times Areema residents feel like they are stuck in the middle of two communities who simply do not get on. They have no control of incidents outside of their community, but often bear the brunt of events unrelated to the people of Areema.

Parades

There are several parades through the Dunmurry village area close to Areema at the railway bridge. According to the PSNI in previous years

there have been some problems with rival groups of Unionists and Nationalists *'waving flags at each other'*. However, the PSNI were keen to stress that any difficulties were usually minor and that the situation was much better than elsewhere in the Province, with a preference for *'paint bombs, not petrol bombs'*:

We are lucky in that there's not much in the way of contentious parades here (PSNI representative).

However, there were conflicting reports from residents as to the effect the parades have on the area itself. The majority viewpoint was that the main parade usually passed off peacefully, but with several incidents occurring throughout the years:

I think it's really quite peaceful. There has been the odd run in (Resident).

However, several residents in Areema felt that during times of heightened tension during the summer marching season, the Dunmurry village area almost became a no go area for Nationalists:

During the summer, I'd say Dunmurry village was off limits. My 12 year old daughter is scared to go down there. Even I've been called names (Resident).

Most residents felt that at present the situation was under control. However, according to several interviewees, the area has in the past become susceptible to the wider political situation in Northern Ireland, and violence elsewhere in Northern Ireland has raised tensions within Areema. Flashpoints such as parade disputes, or issues around the manifestations of Unionist/Loyalist culture in the Dunmurry area have, according to Dunmurry representatives, already acted as a magnet drawing in paramilitaries from outside the immediate location. One interviewee reported difficulties around the Dunmurry village parade in 2005:

What they (paramilitaries) had intended to do was just beyond thought. What need did they have to be there? God only knows what their philosophy is, they have just targeted Dunmurry, and because of the community change, people in Dunmurry are feeling under threat (Community worker).

The general consensus was that at present the situation in the area was reasonably peaceful, however there were concerns expressed that incidents elsewhere in Northern Ireland such as the Whiterock riots in September 2005, had the potential to 'spark' off violence particularly between Seymour Hill and Twinbrook, with Areema often caught

between the two. Residents of Dunmurry appeared to be concerned that relations with Areema may deteriorate should they see their area as being encroached upon by west Belfast.

Young People

A majority of young people interviewed said that they would mix with other young people from a different community background than their own. All of the young people spoken to referred to community background as not being an issue at all in relationship building in the area:

I'm a Catholic and he's a Protestant. We don't see it as a problem; they're neighbours and friends (Young resident).

Adults too were of a similar opinion that young people in general mixed with one another regardless of their community background. One resident said how one could look out their window and see an assortment of soccer jerseys, which elsewhere in the Province would be very rare to see:

They do mix, over the summer, they all play together, all of them, and they'll be out there in their Celtic and Rangers t-shirts and they all play (Resident).

A common perception among the young people interviewed, was that they would mix more than local adults, as they had more opportunities to do so:

There's more opportunity for us to mix than adults if we're hanging out outside. You're not going to get adults out playing football (Young resident).

However, much was made of the informal nature of this mixing, as it was based on 'hanging out' in the area, or playing football on the green. All of the young people interviewed referred to there being a distinct lack of facilities for them in the local area. Discussions revealed that the location of youth facilities in predominantly single identity areas such as Twinbrook or Dunmurry proved problematic for some young people. Local adult residents similarly acknowledged the lack of youth provision as one of the main issues in the area. The survey findings reported similar views, with very few people participating in a youth club (Table 10),

Table 10: Which youth clubs are used?

	% of respondents
Areema youth clubs	2
Dunmurry youth clubs	3
Twinbrook / Poleglass youth clubs	3
Seymour Hill youth clubs	1
Lisburn youth clubs	1
Elsewhere	3

The low level of participation in youth facilities is highlighted by the fact that only 3% of young people in Areema go to youth clubs in Dunmurry and Twinbrook and elsewhere, while only 1% respectively attend youth facilities in Seymour Hill and Lisburn.

Like adults the lack of any form of youth facility in Areema necessitates that young people travel outside the area to access facilities. The view of young Protestants was that they would not feel comfortable using youth facilities in Twinbrook, while young Catholics would not feel safe using facilities in Dunmurry, particularly at night. Further discussions with young people revealed that if they were forced to choose which youth facility to attend, they would primarily go to where they feel safe, and several local residents suggested that this choice was usually determined by their community background:

I'd feel uncomfortable going to Dunmurry. I'd go down during the day, but not at night time now. I go to a youth club in Twinbrook, but young Protestants wouldn't feel comfortable going there, they wouldn't go (Young resident).

The lack of facilities and problems encountered in accessing youth facilities in other areas led to several parents stating that they would much rather there was a purpose built youth facility in the area, somewhere they could visibly see them going to and coming from:

At the end of the day you don't want your kids to go into Twinbrook, or down into Dunmurry (Resident).

Similarly, the young people interviewed expressed a desire for some form of facility in the area itself, so that they did not have to leave the area to participate in leisure activities:

We go away a lot into Belfast. If there was somewhere about here it would be easier, instead of spending all your money going down the town, like playing basketball here or something like that (Young resident).

It became evident that many young people did not participate in organised youth activities in the surrounding areas. One local resident suggested that the low levels of participation in youth activities reflected the fact that many young people did not wish to attend a youth facility that their friends of a different community background wouldn't feel comfortable attending:

They do mix in this estate, but Protestants can't go up there (Twinbrook), and Catholics can't go down to Dunmurry, so they are stuck here with nothing (Resident).

The point was reinforced by one young person who spoke of the difficulties they faced when attempting to use surrounding facilities:

I feel comfortable in Dunmurry like. I don't know about Twinbrook (Young resident).

The young people perceived there to be a number of issues around safety in Twinbrook and Dunmurry and reported a number of incidents involving verbal abuse or physical attack as having occurred in the past. At one stage the police escorted the young people from Areema to and from Stevenson's youth facility in Dunmurry village:

There is a problem as most of them are saying now that they can't use the youth facilities in the village (PSNI representative).

and,

There was an occasion when we had to go with them on evenings, just to make our presence known, so nothing did happen then (PSNI representative).

One Dunmurry representative said that these attacks were isolated incidents, and they would like to see renewed attempts at including Areema young people within Stevenson's youth centre's activities:

We feel that a lot of these issues are now resolved, and that facilities in the community can be used to bring young people together (Youth worker).

It appeared to be the case that younger teenagers felt somewhat safer travelling to other areas, and it was older teenagers who appeared to be more apprehensive venturing into neighbouring communities. One interviewee highlighted how the lack of youth facilities was more problematic for young people once they reach a certain age and wished to go to youth clubs:

We need something for young people, or kids here. I don't want my son to have to go to Belfast. If there was somewhere here for him and his friends to go to and mix (Resident).

Therefore, despite the wider area having a variety of youth facilities, their location in predominantly single-identity areas was said by the vast majority of interviewees to be problematic for young people living in a mixed estate:

We're strangers no matter where we go. It would be good to have something here (Young resident).

Several young people identified the Dunmurry railway station as a point beyond which they would usually not pass, particularly at night, and there was a general consensus that if you did go into another area, it was advisable not to be identifiable in terms of your community background:

If I wanted to go down to Dunmurry you'd have to change your GAA top so you would, and the same with people wearing Rangers tops in Twinbrook. But in here, no one would really care (Young resident).

and,

I wouldn't really go past the station; I'd stick to this end. They had signs spray painted on the bridge (Young resident).

Another young person referred to an incident where they had been confronted by members of the UYM (the youth wing of the UDA) at the railway bridge, but reported that things were *'fine now'*. This perhaps fits in with the wider perception in the surrounding areas that Areema is now a Nationalist estate.

The theme of identification was also alluded to by several young people who spoke of some difficulties faced during times of heightened tension in other areas when they were wearing their school uniform in the Dunmurry village area:

It isn't very often, but sometimes during the early summer maybe you have to be wary of what you are wearing (Young resident).

One parent spoke of the concerns they had with regards to young people's community background being identifiable by school uniform:

She can be recognised by her school uniform, so she always takes it off if she is ever going down there (Dunmurry Village) (Resident).

The perception amongst young people that youth facilities in surrounding areas were not easily accessible was coupled with a desire for facilities in their own area. Despite the difficulties associated with youth provision in the area, and the failure of the area to secure a youth worker due to limited resources, there have been a number of attempts to facilitate various youth projects in recent years with some success.

Agents of Integration

The Areema Residents' Association was established in 1991, and consists of 12 volunteers who meet regularly with the Housing Executive, PSNI, Lisburn City Council and DRD among other statutory and voluntary organisations. The group run a variety of activities in the local community, including a three-day summer festival, which many residents felt was effective in helping to get to know others in the community. The Association have identified their central aim as keeping the area as a mixed estate.

One theme that emerged from discussions with the Residents' Association was that the lack of a purpose-built facility from which to operate was detrimental to their work in the community. At present, the Association works out of an office in the area, which is only insured for meetings and which presents a problem when trying to arrange activities in the community:

I really think people want to be involved, but there is nowhere for this to take place (Areema Residents' Association representative).

Another theme emanating from discussions was the difficulty in dealing with local politicians for fear of alienating individuals from the 'other' community. It appeared that any work had to be conducted sensitively so as not to portray images of favouritism. It was evident that it was quite frustrating for the Residents' Association when people from different community backgrounds were working closely within the community to regenerate the area and improve facilities, yet this was not being reciprocated at a political level.

There was a mixed youth soccer team in the area, which provided a much-needed activity for the youth in the area given the lack of facilities. The team was mixed in terms of community background, age and gender, but unfortunately stopped running sometime in 2005 due to the loss of the coach to another team.

There are currently moves being made by the Residents' Association to try and re-establish the mixed youth football team in the area, and plans are afoot to build a purpose-built soccer facility hopefully in the next 5 years. The Association has been in discussion with local church groups, schools such as Holy Rosary and several other groups would be keen to partake in activities on the sports facility, which will provide soccer, GAA and other sporting opportunities.

In discussions with a local politician, it also emerged that attempts were under way to integrate Areema into the wider Dunmurry area itself in an attempt to create and sustain partnerships. Particular attention was being given to a new neutral venue for a youth facility in the area, and there are currently discussions as to creating a drop-in centre in Dunmurry:

We had looked at the police station at one stage…that might be somewhere where everybody could use in a neutral environment (Local politician).

There are current attempts to re-establish the Youth Committees in the local area, including representation from Areema. Seymour Hill has its own youth committee who conducted a Youth Audit of the area before Christmas 2005. The SEELB stated that they need a contact in Areema to work with, as current youth provision is sorely lacking in the area.

The residents and in particular the Residents' Association lobbied the DOE to put speed bumps in at the entrance to the estate, but this was rejected. This was an example of a project which could unite the community regardless of religious affiliation. One particular incident, which was said to have been an example of positive community support, was residents' protests against NIHE attempts to build 11 family homes on the green in the area.

However, the lobbying to install a gate at the entrance to Twinbrook caused division within Areema along traditional religious lines, as there were some residents who were afraid of attack from Seymour Hill and felt that the exit was their only escape route.

It is the Residents' Association view that apathy amongst the community was high, and that their work was not appreciated. Some residents are said to be apathetic at best and at worst hostile towards the Association's efforts. There is the possibility that because it is a mixed area, people would rather not get involved in things and keep themselves to themselves.

It was apparent that there were limited opportunities for mixing and integrating within the Areema area for both young people and adults. In recent years the Residents' Association have attempted to promote their area and lobby for facilities. However, for the most part this has fallen on deaf ears. The limited opportunities for integration have had a detrimental impact on the levels of mixing within the community, more so for adults than young people. According to the majority of respondents it wasn't community background that was negating interaction but a distinct lack of opportunities and a weak community infrastructure.

Summary

There was a degree of confusion from several residents as to defining Areema as a mixed community. There was a general consensus that the demographics in the community had changed in recent years, and that the area was not totally dominated by one community grouping. However, there was an increased awareness that a growing Nationalist population was impacting numerically on the community background of residents in Areema.

Local residents had noted a number of visible incidents that had drawn them to the conclusion that the area was more Nationalist than in previous years. The impact of the changing demographics was highlighted as a key factor in levels of integration and social mixing within the area. However, it was not felt that perceived community background was inhibiting people's ability to mix, instead people felt that the length of residency and high turnover of houses was restricting people fostering relationships and developing a sense of community in the area. Furthermore, the lack of a strong community infrastructure and facilities to support mixing has also impacted on residents' ability to develop social ties within the area.

All of these factors have the potential to diminish Areema's standing as a mixed community. Historically it has managed to exist even though it is geographically situated between two largely Unionist and Nationalist communities. The local residents are aware of the potential for the estate to 'tip' into a category viewed as segregated, and are attempting to address these concerns and create mechanisms and facilities that will sustain their community as a mixed and diverse one.

Chapter Four
Rathfriland

The statistics don't really tell the real story…the perception from local people is that the growing Nationalist population is making the area more mixed (Resident).

Rathfriland is a small rural town in South Down, approximately 13 miles from both Newry and Banbridge. Historically the area was renowned for the farming industry, and geographically as the gateway to the Mourne Mountains. There has been a minimal amount of research into levels of integration, segregation and social mixing within rural communities (Murtagh, 2000). Urban developments have been heavily scrutinised, and the residential boundaries are, in most cases, visible and easily identifiable. However, detecting whether residential segregation exists in rural towns and villages can prove problematic. The Rural Community Network highlighted the difficulty in detecting sectarian boundaries within rural communities in their response to the Shared Future Document:

In the face of decades of sectarian violence, community division, polarisation and mistrust, rural communities have increasingly become more segregated. With no peace walls, sectarian interfaces in many rural areas are simply worked out by flags or often hidden, fuelled by family and community history, personal experience, land ownership, shopping patterns and business habits (RCN 2003).

Perceptions of Rathfriland

According to the Northern Ireland Census for 1991 and 2001 the population within Rathfriland has remained relatively stable. In 1991 the total population for the Ward was 2,299 with 60% indicating that they were Protestant or other, 31% Catholic and 9% no religion or did not state. In 2001, the total population was 2,306 with 59% indicating that they were Protestant or other, 29% Catholic and 12% no religion or did not state. However, discussions with interviewees revealed distinct differences between the Census data and people's perceptions of the demographic make up of the area. There was a strong opinion that in recent years the area had become more Nationalist, with an influx of young Catholic families. As a result, the community as a whole had become less Unionist and had gradually moved towards one that was more mixed:

You can see a change in the make up of the community. In the last decade there have been more Catholic families moving into the town…I wouldn't say that it is either predominantly Unionist or Nationalist, at the minute there is a balance (Resident).

There was an acknowledgement that Rathfriland used to be predominantly Unionist, but with a significant Nationalist population. Interviewees pointed to the now redundant large army base and police station as past indicators to justify their previous Unionist view of the town. According to some interviewees, Rathfriland had been known in some quarters as a 'garrison' town, ringed off with security barriers and manned patrols. However, since the cease-fires a degree of normality had returned to the town, with the closure of the army base, the removal of the security barriers and the decision to reassign the police station to part-time basis.

Respondents pointed to the 1990s when there was a demographic shift in relation to the community background of people living in Rathfriland. There was a general consensus that the growth of the Unionist population had remained stagnant and that the Catholic population had increased at a significant rate. Although this increase was not noted in the Census figures, several interviewees felt that in the last decade Rathfriland was gradually becoming 'greener':

When I first arrived here I would have perceived the town as mainly Protestant, but lately I would define it as mixed, and maybe even expanding towards a majority Nationalist community (Resident).

It was also noted that the expanding Catholic community was not entirely made up of local residents. There was an acknowledgement that 'outsiders' from a Catholic community background were being attracted to the area, and purchasing properties within the town:

I moved into a new development just under three years ago, and my estate must be nearly all Catholic…these people are not locals, they have moved here from other areas (Resident).

The potential impact that outsiders may have on existing levels of mixing and integration within Rathfriland will be discussed below. But first it is important to discuss the various reasons attributed to the rise in Catholic families locating to Rathfriland. The cost of living along with lower house prices was one incentive pointed to by residents who recently moved into the area. Surrounding areas like Newcastle, Newry, Rostrevor

and Banbridge had seen a dramatic rise in the property market. For first time buyers it was near impossible to get on the property ladder. However, close by towns like Rathfriland, Hilltown and Castlewellan offered property at an affordable level for first time buyers:

We bought a new house for £92,000 just over two years ago…there is a new phase currently going up beside it and they are selling for nearly £150,000 (Resident).

Secondly, the geographical location of Rathfriland appealed to prospective homeowners and new residents. By vehicle, Newry, Banbridge and Newcastle were no more than thirty minutes drive, with Belfast close to an hour away. Those working in urban areas were not put off by the commute, and indicated that the extra miles they had to travel were worth it, considering the size and cost of property they could purchase in places like Rathfriland:

We moved here because the houses were cheap and it was only an hour to Belfast, that's nothing, nowadays (Resident).

Thirdly, it became apparent that several families had chosen to live in Rathfriland because it was a rural community, but still relatively close to urban areas. They had previously lived in large developments but had decided to bring their families up within a rural environment. They were attracted to Rathfriland because it was viewed as relatively mixed and stable, with few incidents of sectarian violence. Furthermore, the rural aspect to living in the area was significant in persuading families to relocate there:

We wanted to get out of the city…somewhere that was in the countryside and you didn't have to worry about flags, murals and all that crap (Resident).

A Mixed Community

Although the area has been perceived as predominantly Unionist, respondents were keen to promote the area as more of a mixed rural community. Respondents were asked to justify their reasoning that Rathfriland was more mixed than the 2001 Census figures would indicate. Respondents pointed to the fact that they could shop, socialise and travel throughout Rathfriland without consciously worrying that their community background could be cause for danger. They drew comparisons with urban areas where interfaces and 'peace lines' marked the territory of one particular community, and residential housing was

segregated solely on the community background of its occupants. This was not the case in Rathfriland, where community background was not viewed as a significant factor in shaping the lives of local residents:

The area is pretty well mixed there is nowhere that is identified as Nationalist/Republican, Unionist/Loyalist…that includes pubs, shops and housing estates (Resident).

This view of mixed housing estates has been reinforced by discussions with the local Northern Ireland Housing Executive, who revealed that they have had no experience of trouble associated with sectarianism, and had no reason to relocate anybody because of intimidation or conflict related incidents:

All of the housing estates in the area are mixed to some degree…there have been no issues relating to flags, murals or sectarian graffiti, there hasn't really been anything to report (NIHE representative).

Issues around flags and murals were discussed with the interviewees and it became apparent that during the summer months, which coincide with the marching season, several flags had been positioned throughout the town centre by local bands. To most respondents this was a natural occurrence that failed to raise any alarm, or increase tensions within the community:

You don't really notice the flags in July anymore…the bands put them up when they are parading and then take them down by August, I don't think it bothers that many people (Resident).

This view was also reflected in the findings from the questionnaire, when respondents were asked to indicate how concerned they were about a number of topics (Table 11). It appeared that residents were most concerned about attacks on the elderly (69%), compared to only 8% of residents who very concerned about flags.

Table 11: Residents concerns in Rathfriland

	Very concerned %	Concerned %	Not concerned %
Attacks on elderly	69	19	6
Dog fouling/litter	50	39	0
Paramilitary activity	8	31	25
Parade violence	8	25	28
Flags	8	25	31

It became clear that long-term residents of Rathfriland had witnessed a significant shift in the make up of the community background of people now living in the area. An influx of outsiders attracted towards cheap properties and acceptable commuting to urban areas had altered the perceived community background of the area, shifting it more to a mixed rather than Unionist community. Interviewees felt that Rathfriland was a place where those from the Catholic and Protestant communities could live side by side in relative harmony. There appear to be no lines of demarcation that separate people from either community, and in one sense, people's community background did not impact on their quality of life.

In general terms the respondents illustrated Rathfriland as somewhere that all sections of the community could live together. At one level this appears to be a successful concept of what the 'perfect town' in Northern Ireland should look like. However, further analysis would reveal whether people simply co-existed with limited integration or participated in mixing at all levels of community life.

Impact of Outsiders

Murtagh (1999) noted that the balance of a population could impact on levels of relationships within a community. With this in mind, several interviewees from both Protestant and Catholic community backgrounds were asked whether they thought that the current Unionist community of Rathfriland had felt threatened by the growing Nationalist population in the area. There were mixed responses, but generally interviewees felt that the Unionist community were unperturbed by the increase in Nationalists and did not see them as a threat:

No not at all…there might be an increase, but it won't make any difference to the Unionists in the area (Resident).

Interestingly, one interviewee indicated that the community background of the new settlers was immaterial, and what was of concern to them was that they didn't know any of the new families residing in the area. They had lived in the rural community all their lives and were used to meeting people and gradually establishing something of a relationship with them. However, since the increase in new housing developments, the interviewee was encountering new people whom she had no connection with and found it difficult to establish a rapport with them:

Rathfriland has got very big in the last few years…I wouldn't know the people living here anymore, it used to be that I knew everyone (Resident).

There were also some Unionist interviewees who were slightly concerned about the increase in Nationalists residing in the Rathfriland area. The status quo that they had been used to was, from their perspective, in danger of changing. The respondents cited examples of other parts of Northern Ireland where the Nationalist population had gone from being a significant minority to a large majority, and unsettled the community as a whole:

There are concerns about the growing Nationalist population and the impact on existing community relations…just look at other areas in Northern Ireland where there has been an influx of Nationalists, tensions have developed and they have exerted their new found influence on issues such as parades and flags (Resident).

One interviewee didn't think that the Unionist community were threatened by the growing Nationalist population, but did believe that the increase in Nationalist residents was responsible for an increase in sectarian incidents:

It used to be that Rathfriland was 75% Protestant, and everyone seemed to get on. Recently there have been more Catholics moving into the area, and since these outsiders came in, there has been an increase in sectarian incidents and tensions, and more trouble during the summer months (Resident).

Issues around sectarian tensions and community conflict will be discussed further in the report. The respondents revealed an awareness that Rathfriland in terms of community background was changing, with the majority perceiving a shift towards a mixed view of the area. There were those who were concerned about the implications on the community by the clear change in demographics:

That is one of the major concerns that people from both sides of the community have (the threat of outsiders)…people are anxious about the arrival of outsiders, and how they might affect the community spirit that has been created (Resident).

According to one interviewee, those who were apprehensive about the change in the community background of residents in Rathfriland were not without justification. They pointed to other areas in South Down, especially the Newry and Mourne Council area, as places that had recently seen influxes of Nationalist families moving into areas that had previously been viewed as Unionist or mixed:

You can't blame them; all they see is the green tidal wave of Nationalism sweeping towards Rathfriland from the border (Statutory representative).

The Agricultural Factor

It was generally noted that up until the 1970s farming was a major contributor to the local economy and employment within the area. However, it became clear that the basic economic and commercial institutions that existed within the community had progressively been eroded. The agricultural industry was central to many people's lives and dictated where they socialised and shopped but recently that had declined and forced people to adapt and diversify into alternative economic and social activities.

The importance of the agricultural industry in fostering relationships between families and residents of Rathfriland was expressed through several interviewees. There was a strong perception that in 'bygone years' people had closer friendships with their neighbours, took more pride in their area, and contributed to a strong feeling of community spirit. According to respondents the farming industry was a contributing factor, where people regardless of their community background shared similar hopes and fears:

Over the years Catholic and Protestant neighbours have helped each other…when the harvest was being brought in people worked together, it didn't matter who, or what you were. The same when people had to gather potatoes, everyone got stuck in…religion wasn't an issue; it was natural not forced (Resident).

The influence of the farming industry cannot be underestimated. It was the mechanism that allowed for engagement and interaction between people, and created bonds that transferred from the working to the social environment. To succeed communities could not divide, but by co-operation and sharing the community as a whole was allowed to develop:

In the past, both communities have a history of working together because of the farming industry…it was the only way the community as a whole could have survived (Resident).

Other research has also noted the prominent role that farming has had in encouraging and facilitating social relationships and developing a strong sense of community spirit. Murtagh (2002) noted that the lack of

monetary exchange, mutual friendship and shared interest in the weather, European Union grants or the effects of BSE bind farmers in a meaningful and sincere way.

There was an acceptance from respondents that Rathfriland was no different to anywhere else in Northern Ireland in relation to the declining agricultural industry. Any farming that continued in the area relied more upon the immediate family and there was no sharing of tasks with friends and neighbours. To an extent the community aspect of farming had been replaced with an individualistic role, which limited the amount of interaction and engagement between people from the area. This view was also reported through the work of Glendinning (2005) who noted the limited opportunities for neighbours in rural communities to participate in activities that in previous years had involved large sections of the community:

Gone are the communal events of haymaking and threshing to be replaced with the much more solitary practice of silage and the combine…instead of having to walk to a neighbour you now contact them by phone and the chance of meeting on the road and passing the time of day are reduced (Glendinning).

Further discussions with respondents on the historical significance of the farming industry led some to recollect memories of the weekly market that was held in the centre of Rathfriland. Even though the market was no longer a significant event in the Rathfriland calendar, several interviewees held fond memories of the market and its economic and social value to the town. The interviewees reminisced about how the town had changed from the days when the market was the central focus of attention and the subsequent impact it had on friendships and acquaintances:

This used to be a very vibrant market town in the 1950s and 60s. There would have been a lot of local businesses, and people would have come from a wide area to spend money in the town (Resident).

Even though the declining agricultural industry had an economic impact on businesses in the town, it also inadvertently impacted on social relationships within the area. The markets were not only places for people to buy and sell livestock and produce. They were also a setting for social interaction between farmers and their families. One interviewee in particular recalled how many of the deals were finalised by men in the bars, while the women were shopping:

A handshake and a drink was what usually happened…the crack was mighty in the bars on Market day…the women would have been buying the weekly shopping, the place would have been buzzing with animals and children all over the place (Resident).

This setting was an integral part of relationship building within the community. It provided people with an opportunity to catch up with neighbours who they would not necessarily meet, engage in conversations and generally share each other's experiences. This social mixing did not extend to farmers alone. All sections of the community participated at some level, thus strengthening community ties within the town and surrounding areas:

You might not have seen people all week, but on market day you seen the same old faces…we shared a drink, caught up on gossip and generally had a bit of a laugh (Resident).

According to those interviewees who had first-hand experience of the market, the current residents of the town were missing an important opportunity to mix, socialise and strike up relationships with people from outside the immediate area.

Shared Spaces

A significant part of the research was to determine how much integration and/or mixing occurred within Rathfriland between adults and young people from different community backgrounds. Initially discussions focused on determining the places people went or activities that they participated in which involved different sections of the community. Within Rathfriland there are a number of environments where people from the community have an opportunity to meet and interact.

There were several public houses in the centre of town, none of which according to respondents were labelled either as predominantly Protestant or Catholic as a result of their owners or clientele. There was general consensus that the bars were relatively mixed and did not appear to promote one particular tradition. One interviewee indicated that bars often showed a variety of sports and took an active interest in local sports and clubs:

One of the local bars often shows Celtic and Gaelic games…people can drink where they want, in fact some of the bars have sponsored the local soccer and Gaelic football clubs (Resident).

and,

There are no problems with any of the bars; they are not seen as being one way or the other…it has always been like that (Resident).

Several interviewees were asked whether young people (those above the legal limit to consume alcohol) also freely frequented bars in the town, regardless of their perceived community background. There was general agreement that young people had no inhibitions about drinking anywhere in Rathfriland. However, when deciding to leave the town for a night out, some might be inclined to make their decisions on where to go based on their perceptions of that town/city's community background:

The pubs around here are mixed, there is no such thing as a Protestant or Catholic pub…people drink freely, there is no segregation…but young people are more likely to go to Banbridge if they are Protestant and Newry if they are Catholic (Former resident).

The shopping patterns of local residents were also analysed, as shopping was viewed as an opportunity for people to meet and interact. It became evident that large numbers of people from Rathfriland conducted their shopping in nearby towns and cities, and only used Rathfriland for essential supplies such as milk or newspapers. This limited the opportunities local residents had to 'catch up with friends and neighbours' or mix socially with the wider community:

The town is in economic decline…there are quite a few derelict buildings. With the advent of Newry and Banbridge as shopping towns, people have stopped using Rathfriland (Resident).

There are a number of shops that continue to exist in the town. Discussions revealed that distinctive differences existed in relation to people's shopping patterns and their age. Older residents were more inclined to stay within the confines of the town centre, while younger families accessed shops further afield. The older residents had established a routine, and were more accustomed to using the same services in the town. They continued to encounter their friends and felt safe in their surroundings. The younger generation did not appear to be as concerned about meeting people or supporting their local businesses:

The majority of people, especially the younger generation, would travel to outside cities and towns to shop…but my mother, she shops in Rathfriland along with many of her friends (Resident).

One interviewee did note that the ability to have groceries delivered had meant that people were less inclined to meet each other in the local shops. They were aware of several people from an older generation who did not have to frequent the town, thus missing the opportunity to engage and communicate with neighbours and friends:

The wee white Tesco van, it is forever driving about these parts…it is never off the road (Resident).

Further discussions revealed that in the past people might have used their community background as a significant factor in determining where they shopped. Interviewees were asked whether local residents would have selected either Nationalist perceived Newry or Unionist perceived Banbridge solely on their own community background. A large number of respondents felt that perceptions of a town would have influenced people's shopping habits, but noted that in the last decade, circumstances had changed and instead of people considering the perceived community background of an area they were more focused on quality, cost and choice:

In the past people would have shopped in different places depending on their community background. I would never have shopped in Newry, I would always have headed to Banbridge…because coming from a Protestant background you were more associated with Banbridge. But recently Newry has changed, the shops are better and there is more choice so I go there now (Resident).

It became apparent that there were limited clubs or programmes within Rathfriland that facilitated mixing and integration. Interviewees highlighted the community centre as one place where all sections of the community could access, but acknowledged that its services did not suit everyone:

This is such a small place that everything is shared…you have the community centre which has a gym in it and it is used by both sides of the community (Resident).

One organisation that was discussed at length by several interviewees was the Rathfriland football club. The club was a central focus within the community, with many of its players, members and supporters themselves local residents from Rathfriland. Not only was the club successful on the football field but it also assisted in developing relationships between people from the area. The club was perceived as very much mixed and encouraged young people regardless of community background to play football:

The football club was officially opened in 1962, although it was on the go many years prior to that. It is a very well run club…it is mixed involving all sections of the community. Players, supporters and their families have built up strong relationships, and these are built upon when they are out in the community (Resident).

According to one interviewee the football club played a crucial role in assisting community relations within the town. Through playing for the club, they developed friendships with people that they might never have met and continued with these friendships outside the setting of the football club:

I think that the local football club has a lot to do with it. Young people are there from a very young age, and their families become associated with it…there is no religious divide within the club, and most people from the town either play or support them…and then you meet the same people out in Rathfriland and you begin to socialise with them (Resident).

One interviewee was very critical of the level of provision that offered opportunities for young people from various community backgrounds to mix socially. They felt that Rathfriland had no facilities or programmes in place that encouraged integration or even promoted cross community initiatives:

There has never really been any real opportunity for the two communities to come together. They had their own scouts, guides, youth clubs and schools…the only time they are together is the local play group, and that is when they are under four years of age, but once they go to school they are divided. There are no opportunities for them to come together (Resident).

It should be noted that discussions with youth workers revealed that Rathfriland in the 1980s and 1990s had a successful youth club that attracted widespread support across the community. However, a second youth club was established which resulted in those from the Catholic community attending the St Patrick's Youth Club and young people from the Protestant community attending the Hubb Youth Club. Both youth clubs continued to operate side by side for a number of years, until they both closed in 2001:

Realistically there wasn't the room for two youth clubs in this small town…They started to lose support, people just couldn't be bothered. Buildings were becoming run down and it was becoming more and more difficult to find motivated people to assist in them (Youth worker).

It also emerged that since the closure of both youth clubs, nobody from the Rathfriland area has approached youth services to inquire why there is no youth provision in the area, or to the possibility of re-establishing some form of youth facility/programme in the town.

Community Participation

The research explored the willingness of people to engage with others on issues relating to their community. It emerged that within some housing estates there was strong co-operation between residents, and at a more formal level there was a productive group involving local businesses, residents and elected representatives that dealt with issues pertaining to all aspects of the town:

Within Rathfriland there would be a core group of people involved in community issues…that is not to say that the wider community are not interested in those same issues, its just they don't want the responsibility of dealing with them…they would be happy to tag along behind (Resident).

This core group were known as Rathfriland Regeneration and among other things, attempted to renovate derelict buildings in the town and bring them back to business use. It was hoped that by renovating these buildings, it would make Rathfriland a more attractive place to live, work and visit, which in turn would bring much needed economic and social benefits to the local community. The respondents were full of praise for the contributions made by this group, but were also aware that since its development it involved the same small group of people. This was not a criticism, but more a reflection of the fact that the majority of people from the town did not want to be involved at a decision making level, but did want improvements to the area.

Interviews with local residents focused on the numbers of community groups or residents' associations that were in place within Rathfriland. It was soon apparent that there were a limited amount of residents' groups, which was also reinforced through discussions with the local NIHE. Those that were involved in such groups were asked what encouraged them to participate. The driving factors appeared to be a concern for the well being of their family or a particular issue that impacted on their quality of life. One example offered to the researcher centred on a housing estate that had previously suffered from high levels of anti-social behaviour and a lack of investment from statutory bodies. Members from the community took it upon themselves to establish a residents' group and lobby organisations to take an interest in their housing estate. As one

interviewee indicated, if the issues had not been present, then they would not even have thought about involving themselves with a residents' group. The respondent acknowledged that by joining the group they felt that they were making a difference and highlighted the dramatic changes to their estate as one of the benefits. Furthermore, it was noted that through the residents' group they had established relationships with members of the local council and statutory organisations, people that they would not usually have come into contact with:

The community group was crucial in changing this estate. The residents worked closely with members of statutory groups and council representatives…it is the same people from around here that always get involved, but the wider community are just happy that things are getting done (Resident).

Another interviewee indicated how being part of a local Neighbourhood Watch scheme had introduced them to the dynamics of council policy and decision-making. They had initially joined the group for safety issues, but had gradually become interested in the various organisations that had a vested interest in their community:

We have recently established a Neighbourhood Watch scheme that combines the neighbouring streets…we regularly meet with the council and police, along with representatives from the DPP…its good, it keeps everyone informed (Resident).

Several interviewees concluded that there was a degree of apathy from local residents towards participating in community groups and residents' associations. Some felt that it was a thankless task, with the commitment outweighing the rewards. Those that were linked with these types of groups noted that the same people regularly attended, and that a small minority represented the whole community:

The thing with community groups is that getting anything done takes time. People can often get frustrated that nothing physical is being achieved, so a lot of people don't want to get involved because of the nature of the work, its tiresome and time consuming with often very little personal reward…people get disheartened and question why they bother (Resident).

In the case of one interviewee participation in a community group had expanded their social network of friends. Initially they had joined because of an issue that was important to them, and had intended to leave once that issue had been resolved. However, a year later the individual was still associated with the group, and even though they had no particular issues that warranted continuing with the group, they still met once a month:

At our meetings there is always banter and fun. Everyone regardless of community background can enjoy that hour and a half together once a month. Even though there have been no new issues to discuss we still get together and share our bits of gossip…it is just good to talk (Resident).

Discussions also focused on people's relationships with elected representatives and statutory bodies. At one level it seemed that people were aware of the mechanisms in place to contact those in authority, but there were concerns surrounding the future ways of dealing with issues pertaining to their homes and community. The reason for this was due to the recent announcement by the Government on the Review of Public Administration. One aspect of this was the potential for existing Councils to be amalgamated into super councils. Several interviewees felt that Council Buildings in Banbridge (15 miles away) was acceptably close, however if it was relocated to Craigavon that would inhibit their ability to engage in the democratic process.

Sectarian Incidents

Issues around sectarian tensions and attacks were discussed with all respondents to determine whether Rathfriland had experienced any such incidents. There were mixed views on levels of sectarianism within the area, with some indicating that there had been several, while others felt that there had been sporadic, isolated incidents:

There have been a number of sectarian incidents, mainly involving young people, with property being damaged and people incurring injuries (Resident).

and,

You are talking literally in the last four years, being able to count on one hand the number of incidents that were deemed as sectarian in the town…the problem arises when you attempt to distinguish something as sectarian (Resident).

Other interviewees noted the fact that many young people have worn football tops associated with Celtic and Rangers football clubs, and Gaelic Association jerseys around the town and there have been no recorded incidents of sectarian abuse or assaults. There was agreement however that any incidents that had occurred in the area had been conducted by a small minority and did not represent the actions of the wider community. Several interviewees indicated that previous incidents were more than likely due to specific families and their associates:

There has never really been that many incidents surrounding sectarianism…maybe sometimes involving young people, or in the past there have been disagreements between some families, but it would have been contained within that specific group (Resident)

and,

Like anywhere there are individuals and families with strong Loyalist and Republican views, and occasionally they would come to logger heads…but 99% of the population just get on with their lives and sectarianism doesn't come into it (Statutory representative).

There was a general consensus that local residents were united in their condemnation of any form of sectarian behaviour within the town. It was noted on more than one occasion that residents would have been 'shocked' and appalled at any form of sectarianism evident within their town:

And there is almost a self-policing that exists here…when an incident has happened, people have responded to nip it in the bud. Unionists and Nationalists alike have stepped in when incidents have arose that may or may not have offended people (Resident).

For many people the whole concept of sectarianism was alien to them, something that wasn't part of a rural community, but more associated with large urban developments. In several interviewees the word itself brought immediate disdain and rebuttals that it 'wasn't part of this community'. However, it was evident that people were apprehensive that sectarian tensions and behaviour could creep into their community, and disrupt their way of life:

People's attitude would be one of alarm when they heard of an incident that was potentially sectarian. There would be this view 'now come on, we don't want things that happen in the city to happen here'…there is a sense of anxiety that things could turn nasty (Resident).

Contentious Events and Symbols

Rathfriland like many towns and villages throughout Northern Ireland has had issues around parading, flags and bonfires. These issues were not without controversy, and much of the discussions focused on their impact on community relations within the town. Surprisingly, some people's views and perceptions were not influenced by their own

community background, but based more on the impact of these events and symbols on the entire town.

There are two Loyalist marching bands operating within the Rathfriland area:

The Pride of the Hill have been going since 1982…there is a strong sense of tradition within the band…fathers and their sons have been members, and they have competed and won several competitions in Scotland and Northern Ireland (Resident).

and,

The Sons of William were established in 2001, they would be slightly more Loyalist than existing bands…maybe less organised, and more blood and thunder (Resident).

It should be note that at the time of writing the Sons of William were in discussions about disbanding their band in Rathfriland and moving to Banbridge. Several interviewees were critical of the Sons of William and the impact that they had on community relations within the town. Allegations of the playing of sectarian songs, the flying of paramilitary flags, sectarian graffiti and links with the notorious National Front group Combat 18 have been levelled at members or followers of the band, although nobody linked with them has ever been charged for such behaviour. However, some interviewees felt that the Sons of William had been more than accommodating with residents of the town, and had met with groups and engaged in dialogue on potential contentious issues:

They have met with groups and discussed flags, the route of parades, number of bands, and the time the parades would finish at…everything to alleviate the potential for any tension (Resident)

Several interviewees thought that the bands were popular within the town and did not impact on community relations. They highlighted the fact that there were rarely any incidents that required police intervention, there were no protests and generally they were well marshalled. They also thought that local businesses received economic benefits from the large numbers of supporters who filled the town during the parades:

There have been over the years isolated incidents, but there is no history of repeated sectarian behaviour…the bands are well organised and controlled…they do everything possible to eliminate the threat of disorder (Resident).

However, there were some disconcerting voices from respondents who felt that the parades had provided outsiders with the perception that Rathfriland was a Loyalist town, which in their view was not true. They also felt that the parades would possibly be detrimental to relationships between Catholic and Protestant communities in the town:

The two local bands have had a very negative influence on the town…they would have brought people in from all over, their behaviour would have been questionable, and they also had an environmental impact on the town (Resident).

Several Nationalist residents were critical of the number of parades that occurred in Rathfriland throughout the summer. According to one interviewee, 'Catholic residents were prisoners in their own homes when the parades started'. They also pointed to the economic implications, highlighting the fact that the town was basically closed off when there were parades, restricting locals and potential tourists from using facilities in the town centre.

Flags were a further issue that had raised concerns within the Nationalist and parts of the Unionist community in Rathfriland. Throughout the summer months there were a number of flags placed in the town centre:

There are a lot of flags put up during the marching season, Union Jacks and Ulster flags, but thankfully there are none associated with any Loyalist paramilitary groups (Resident).

There were mixed responses to the flags in Rathfriland, but it was generally accepted that they are flown during parts of the marching season. There didn't appear to be that much concern about them, and it was usually taken for granted that it was the norm in Rathfriland:

There are a lot of flags in the area, especially around the summer months when there are parades, but they are not that intimidating…it is like everything else, after a while you become accustomed to them, and just take them for granted (Resident).

In previous years tensions were raised by the strategic placing of flags close to or beside Nationalist businesses and the Catholic Church. However, through discussions with community leaders, outside agencies, political representatives and Council employees, issues pertaining to the distribution of flags and the duration that they are flown have been currently resolved:

The distribution and bringing down of flags is well organised, they are not just tied up with anything. Cylindrical poles are attached, and the flags simply slide in…makes it easy to take them down…there is nothing worse than tatty flags (Resident).

One flag in particular had caused a degree of frustration with an interviewee. Within the town square there was a flagpole with a Union Jack attached that flew all year round. Attempts to determine who was responsible for the flying of the flag proved inconclusive. However, this respondent was adamant that it shouldn't be flown and did not have the consent of the community as a whole:

Its like this, do you see the way a dog lifts his leg and pisses on a lamppost to mark his territory…the same principle applies with that flag (Resident).

The bonfire was a further issue of contention with several interviewees, who felt that it was both socially and environmentally detrimental to the community as a whole. In recent years the bonfire had moved from outside the town to close to the town centre, near a residential area:

There have been a number of issues about the bonfire, people don't want it…they have burnt Irish National flags, and they always seem to set fire to the lamppost, and if that was done by anyone else at a different time of year then they would be arrested (Resident).

However, those associated with the bonfire indicated that they had brought a degree of structure to the process, limited incidents of anti-social behaviour linked with the bonfire and introduced a family atmosphere to the event:

They met with various bodies, found a site that wouldn't cause too much damage…began to attract families and turn it into a community event…and the next day gone and cleaned up the mess (Resident).

These conflicting views have been difficult to prove, although discussions with one statutory body revealed that complaints relating to the bonfire usually depended on the weather, and the most complaints that they have ever received was ten.

Degree of Integration

As previously noted, interviewees acknowledged that Rathfriland had recently undergone significant demographic changes in relation to the

community background of its residents. No longer perceived as a dominant Unionist town, people were more inclined to view it as mixed or one that had a significant Nationalist population. Therefore, discussions centred on the levels of mixing and/or integration that took place between residents of the town. It soon became apparent that interviewees' perceptions on how well both communities integrated and at what level differed significantly. There were those that indicated that the only reason Rathfriland appeared to have a stable and mixed community was due to the Catholic population's fear of raising issues and antagonising the situation:

Catholics do not draw attention to themselves in Rathfriland…in some cases they might be afraid to lift their head above the parapet (Resident).

and,

I would say that the majority of Catholics just keep their heads down and get on with their lives…they don't bother trying to start trouble (Resident).

This was not a popular view expressed by all the respondents, with several Nationalist interviewees rejecting this perception, and indicating that the Catholic community were 'vibrant, and very much a key part of the community as a whole'. Furthermore, several pointed to the lack of sectarian incidents and mixed housing estates as justification that people got along. The community background of residents was not viewed as an inhibiting factor in facilitating or restricting relationships within the community:

People's religion is not an issue in this place…it has never been an issue, everyone is entitled to have their own beliefs and people do not have the right to interfere with that (Resident).

If anything, the length of residency was identified as the significant factor for developing relationships within the town. Several respondents noted that community background was not important, compared to how long someone had lived in the area. This was seen as one of the underlying factors that facilitated relationships between people in the area. The fact that community background was not viewed as facilitating integration was also reflected in the survey findings (Table 12).

Table 12: How many friends are of the same community background as yourself?

	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Some	11	31
Most	7	19
Half	4	11
Socialise outside area	3	8
All	2	6
None	1	3
Don't know	8	22

It became apparent that relations between residents in the area were not based on perceived or actual community background, 31% of respondents said that only some of their friends were of the same community background as themselves. A significant number of respondents (22%) stated that they did not know the community background of their friends in the area, indicating that community background was relatively unimportant in facilitating relationships in the area.

Discussions began to focus on the extent of relationships between people from the Catholic and Protestant community. It was clear that at one level, relationships were courteous and friendly. People within the community acknowledged each other, looked out for their neighbours, and generally co-existed in the one town. However, a large number of respondents felt that underneath this friendly exterior there were underlying issues that were never addressed by either community. They maintained that this was illustrated by the mannerisms and conversations people conducted, by rarely venturing onto perceived controversial topics like religion, politics or sports:

People are very aware of what they are talking about, and there are certain topics and issues that people just do not discuss (Resident).

According to Cairns and Hewstone (2002) theorists examining intergroup contact indicated that Catholics and Protestants who do come into contact are superficially courteous, and to a degree, try not to alert suspicions or change stereotypes. Trew (1986) argued that cross community friendships only functioned as long as certain issues were not mentioned. Many interviewees were of the opinion that the majority of the community avoided these taboo topics and preferred to keep to

'safe' areas in discussions. There was rarely open and honest dialogue on topical issues, as people were often reluctant to create a division:

I don't think that there is ever any honest dialogue between Catholics and Protestants about issues like politics and the Troubles…it can be like a staged conversation, people co-exist but there is no real depth or meaning to their relationships (Resident).

Generally, respondents maintained that even though interaction at times was minimal, and usually on issues that wouldn't offend or cause embarrassment, Rathfriland was an excellent place to live. There was very little reporting of sectarian incidents and people from different community backgrounds managed to live together in the one area. It was interesting to note that one interviewee felt that it was impossible to determine how much integration should exist within any community:

You cannot say that the people mix well, they don't, but they certainly don't threaten each other…they exist together but they do not integrate, and who is to say that they have to? (Resident).

Summary

The discussions with respondents revealed that Catholics and Protestants have managed to live together in Rathfriland in relative harmony for several years. There is no evidence to suggest that there has been a history of sectarian incidents or tensions. There is no social or residential segregation and issues pertaining to flags and parades have been handled in a mature and civilised manner. Although determining how much integration exists has proved difficult, there was a general consensus that people were content to go about their lives, and didn't care much about issues such as politics and religion. Further discussions focused on why both Protestant and Catholic communities could co-exist in a rural community such as Rathfriland, and not in large urban developments:

It is difficult to say why Protestants and Catholics can live together in this community…there are housing estates here that have all the problems that similar estates have in urban areas – social deprivation, drugs, unemployment, alcoholism…yet you have the scenario where the two sides live in a peaceful environment, and often visibly present the cultural icons of Nationalism and Unionism (Resident).

In most cases respondents found it difficult to highlight a specific reason as to why the different communities could co-exist in a shared space.

Instead, they pointed to a number of factors that facilitated the mixing of both Protestant and Catholic communities. There was a perception that people from a rural setting were more pragmatic, laid back and adopted an attitude of 'live and let live'. They were not concerned with issues around politics, paramilitaries or policing and focused more on simply getting by.

There was also an acknowledgement that rural communities were often very small and isolated, and in order to survive people had to work and shop together to sustain employment and local businesses:

It's such a small area, that often people work, play and socialise together…its not as if you can avoid people (Resident).

Other interviewees pointed to the strong sense of tradition in rural communities that emanated from families who had been established in the areas for many years. Children were often brought up in an environment without sectarianism or prejudice and places where community background did not define an individual. These traits were passed down through families, and allowed for communities to remain stable and mixed:

Rathfriland is not a bad place to live in with no real sectarian tensions, and people pull together in times of need regardless of who or what you are (Resident).

Chapter Five
Mixing, Sharing and Integration

The following section documents a number of themes that emerged from the analysis of three mixed residential areas – Ballynafeigh, Areema and Rathfriland. In most cases similar themes recurred throughout each of the areas. However, there were occasions when distinctive differences emerged between rural and urban communities, and these have also been highlighted below.

From the outset residents from each of the areas were keen to stress that they resided in a mixed community. However, respondents found it difficult to define what was meant by 'integration' and 'mixed'. Similar points were continuously raised: What do you mean by mixed? How do you determine what integration is? How much integration is a success? The fact of the matter is there is no universal answer to these questions. What occurs in one community might not work in another. What is perceived as mixed in one area may be seen as unbalanced in another. What is important is how the majority of residents in a particular area perceive their community and manage to sustain the quality of living that they experience.

It was often repeated by interviewees that by drawing attention to their communities and raising awareness around integration and mixing you were risking the potential for their community to be altered. In many cases people did not want to debate and think about why they lived in a community that was perceived as mixed. They were content with their lives and the environment in which they were residing. For many there was no magic ingredient that facilitated mixed areas, in their words a degree of common sense and respect for your neighbour was all it took. However, a number of themes have been developed from the research, which provides us with a greater understanding of the social dynamics that exist in mixed areas, and what mechanisms could be put in place to both develop and sustain mixed communities.

Indicators of a Mixed Area

A number of indicators emerged from the three areas that local residents used to determine that they resided in a mixed community. These indicators were prominent within all of the areas. There was no distinctive difference in rural or urban perspectives:

- **Protestant and Catholic residents** – there are residents of both Catholic and Protestant community backgrounds living in the community
- **Mixed relationships** – local residents were aware that a number of couples in the area were from Catholic and Protestant community backgrounds. They had moved to the area because they perceived it to be mixed, thus safe and secure for mixed couples.
- **Few sectarian incidents** – a minimal number of incidents were attributed to sectarian behaviour. If any incidents did occur, there was shock in the community and condemnation from everyone.
- **Acceptance of cultural symbols and events** – there was dialogue and engagement on issues such as flags and parades. Compromises were made and agreement reached which generally the community accepted. However, there was less of an acceptance of more permanent symbols such as Loyalist or Republican murals.
- **Freedom of movement** – an individual's community background did not dictate where they could travel within their community, socialise or shop.
- **Expression of culture** – people were allowed to live their lives; they could participate in sports and associate with legitimate organisations without the fear of persecution.
- **Community participation** – A cross section of the community, regardless of age, gender or community background participated in associations/clubs and worked together to support the community. This included youth provision that was accessed by young people from different community backgrounds.
- **Diversity** – A growing number of minority ethnic groups residing in an area was seen as an acknowledgement that the area was safe and secure.

Generally, people felt that if these indicators existed within their community then it could be deemed mixed, regardless of the numerical balance of a particular group. It is important to note the difference between mixed and integrated. These indicators represent a mixed community, but they do not provide an indication of the level of integration that exists within that community.

Changing Demographics

Within each of the three areas there was a clear indication that in recent years there had been a dramatic change in the demographic make up of the area, and this has had implications on internal relationships, integration and perceptions of the area. In the last decade there had been

an increase in the Catholic population in each of the three areas. For the most part, this had a minimal impact on the overall balance of the communities. However, there was a feeling that if the increases continued there was the potential for the population to 'tip' towards being a dominant Catholic community.

There were a number of reasons for this significant change in demographics:

- **Perception of the area** – In a sense mixed communities have the potential to be responsible for their own eradication. Their success is often widely publicised and people see the attractiveness of residing in a mixed area, and move to the community, thus affecting the demographic balance of the area.
- **Geographical location** – More of a factor in the rural community. People were moving from urban areas to live in the countryside because property prices were lower than in the city, and the commute was still acceptable.

It should also be noted that there were growing minority ethnic groups in these mixed communities. One factor attributed to this rise was that mixed areas were often portrayed as quiet, stable, and relatively diverse. Several minority ethnic groups had relocated to these areas after experiencing incidents of racial harassment and intimidation. Interviews with local residents indicated awareness about the rise of ethnic minorities into the area. In the most part this was welcomed, with a widely held view that it would illustrate the tolerance and diversity that existed within mixed communities.

It was interesting to note that one of the key findings in relation to interaction and building relationships was the length of time a person/family had spent in the area and not their community background. Within each of the three areas under analysis there was no evidence that people forged friendships and connections simply on the basis of a person's community background. It appeared that length of residency was the key component in creating and sustaining relationships. Subsequently, the changing demographics in these areas were placing a strain on people's ability to get to know their neighbours.

Agents of Integration

It was evident that there were a number of organisations and physical environments that existed within communities that facilitated integration. In each area, there was a prominent community group that

championed concerns of local residents and promoted the area, both socially and economically. It was clear that such groups were crucial in both sustaining and developing their communities. They provided a facility where people could meet, discuss issues pertaining to their area, and foster relationships both within the community and with outside agencies and organisations. Their importance in sustaining these mixed communities cannot be understated; they provide the link with the wider community and continue to develop relationships within the community.

Communities also looked to powerful figures within their area for guidance and leadership. This was very prominent within one community, where the local clergy had developed a relationship where they promoted tolerance and engagement. They led by example and the various local religious leaders met and worked together on issues that impacted on the community as a whole. Residents saw this relationship build and flourish and it encouraged them to develop bonds with people from other community backgrounds. By setting an example the clergy encouraged others to follow suit and created an environment where shared living was a reality.

A number of physical environments were also identified that facilitated integration:

- **Community centres and youth facilities** – these types of physical structures were seen as crucial in creating social environment were local residents could meet, strike up relationships and develop a sense of sharing within the community.
- **Schools and day care centres** – these were a great opportunity for young people and adults to meet and share different experiences. Regardless if the school is integrated, links between schools reinforced relationships young people had in their communities. Local day care centres were accessed by the entire community, and provided a social setting where adults could meet and share similar experiences with their children attending the centre.
- **Shops** – in recent years with the expansion of supermarkets and department stores, local shopping has declined. In the past, it was an opportunity for people to meet, interact and build relationships, but more people are now restricting themselves to a weekly shop and ignoring local businesses and going to urban sites.
- **Clubs/associations** – leisure activities were highlighted by a number of respondents as ideal opportunities for meeting people and building friendships. There was a distinctive difference between urban and rural communities and the importance of leisure activities

as a means of facilitating integration. There was more choice in urban areas, which meant that there was less of an opportunity for people from the same area to meet. However, in rural areas leisure activities were limited, so more people from a smaller area participated in similar activities. The local football club in Rathfriland was seen as key to building and sustaining relationships in the area. Both players and supporters viewed it as a mixed club, and relationships that were established in the club environment often continued through to other aspects of people's lives. This highlights the importance of people having a common interest in something. It may only be football at the beginning, but provides an opportunity for people to develop an understanding with each other, which may potentially lead to stronger relationships.

- **Bars** – within each of the areas, public houses were seen as popular meeting places for adults. They were mixed environments that often showed GAA sports and soccer, and were not perceived as being dominated by one particular community

Community Participation

Throughout the three areas the research examined the role of local people in less formal community groups, programmes and initiatives. The underlying theme was that a minority of local residents participated in community groups within their area. These groups usually consisted of a small number of people who had been involved since the conception of their group. Furthermore, the same people could also be found on other groups within their local area. A large number of interviewees indicated apathy towards these groups highlighting the amount of time and resources that had to be contributed for a minimal amount of reward. However, it was also apparent that the majority of residents in these areas acknowledged the work of the community groups, and welcomed their contribution for the community as a whole. They felt that there was a need for these groups, and were quite prepared for them to represent the wider community if there were benefits to their immediate area

Age and Integration

The research findings indicated that there were clear differences in the perceptions of adults and young people in relation to their views of levels of integration within their community. Adults were more inclined to perceive their community as mixed compared to young people, and whereas adults would feel that they had freedom of movement within

the community, young people were often more likely to see invisible interfaces and lines of demarcation. Generally adults were more positive about their area and keen to promote it as mixed. The environments that they frequented were often shared by the whole community, whereas young people felt that there was a lack of shared space in their immediate areas.

In most cases young people either attended state or maintained schools and continued friendships outside of school with people of the same community background as themselves. There appeared to be a lack of facilities that promoted a shared environment for young people in their communities, along with minimal programmes and activities that were based in a cross community ethos. This had implications on how young people perceived and often behaved within their community. Incidents of violence and disorder were often attributed to young people, along with isolated incidents of sectarian behaviour.

Levels of Integration

Although the three areas were acknowledged as mixed communities, it was important to determine how much integration actually took place. Within each area there were various levels of integration, ranging from basic acknowledgements to socialising together. There was consensus from older respondents that relationships were not as strong as in previous years. They did feel that this was reflective of society in general, with contemporary lifestyles very much centred on the individual and not the community; people lived in apartments, and they worked, socialised and shopped away from were they lived. This impacted on the ability for people to connect with their neighbours, strike up relationships and contribute to the sense of community in the area.

In each of the communities analysed people acknowledged each other, looked out for their neighbours and were courteous and friendly, and for the most part lived in relative harmony. This could be viewed as co-existence with limited integration. For the majority of people this appears to be a suitable environment to live, but for others, this sense of limited integration has negative implications for the development of the community. They felt that underneath this friendly exterior, underlying issues were not being addressed. This was illustrated by the mannerisms and conversations people engaged in, by rarely venturing onto perceived controversial topics such as religion, politics or sports. Instead, people preferred to stick with safe topics of conversation and ignored the taboo topics for fear of upsetting the status quo.

The Agricultural Factor

This theme was only relevant to the rural Rathfriland community. It became apparent that the agricultural industry had an impact on relationships within the area. Prior to the 1970s farming was a major contributor to the employment and the local economy. It was central to many people's lives and dictated where they socialised and shopped. However, in recent years the farming-dominated economic and commercial institutions that had existed within the community had been progressively eroded. This had forced local people to adapt and diversify into alternative economic and social activities.

There was a general consensus from older respondents that the agricultural industry had been a key component in fostering relationships between local families. This had led many to believe that in previous years people had closer relationships with their neighbours, took more pride in their area, and contributed to the notion of a strong community spirit. The influence of the farming industry cannot be underestimated. It was the mechanism that allowed for engagement and interaction, established bonds that transferred from the working to the social environment. To succeed and survive, communities could not divide, but by co-operating and sharing the community as a whole were able to develop. The older respondents felt that since the demise of the farming industry, relationships within the area had suffered. There was not that common bond shared by the community, people had become more insular and rarely participated in community activities.

Summary

The research findings indicated that there were very few differences between urban and rural mixed communities. Residents had similar views on why they perceived their communities as mixed, which was based on relationships and levels of sectarian violence and disorder and not on the numerical balance of the community. It appeared that integration and relationships were built on the length of residency in a community and not on the perceived community background of an individual and family. Furthermore, there were distinctive differences between adults and young people and their perceptions of the area where they resided and the level of integration they had with those from a different community background to themselves.

In recent years these mixed areas had undergone considerable changes both geographically and demographically. The influx of new build

developments and the increase in population has placed a strain on these communities, which in the long term has implications for their sustainability. Generally, residents have positive experiences of living in these communities, but acknowledge that levels of integration are not as high as in previous years. This leads one to conclude that for the majority of people living in a mixed community, there is co-existence with their neighbours, but limited integration, however as previously highlighted, this may be more to do with changing lifestyles evident throughout the Western world than anything else.

Social Capital, Cohesion and Shared Living

Within each of the mixed areas there were a number of agents of interaction that facilitated integration. These were both organised groups and physical buildings that created an environment of shared space where members of the community could meet, interact and engage on common issues. Several theorists have highlighted the importance of engagement and organised groups initiating interactions within the community. Varshney (2002) established an integral link between the structure of civil society on one hand and ethnic or communal violence on the other. He focused on the inter-communal networks of civic life that bring different communities together. These consisted of Associational and Quotidian forms of civic engagement. The former incorporated business associations, reading, film, and sports clubs and trade unions. The latter referred to everyday forms of civic engagement such as routine interactions, basic dialogue, people eating together and informal/casual meetings. According to Varshney both forms of engagement, if robust, promote peace; likewise their absence or weakness open up space for communal violence.

Much of what Varshney alludes to from his work in India also relates to Northern Ireland. He places greater importance in Associational forms of engagement because pre-existing organised local networks of civic engagement serving the economic, cultural and social needs of the community have the capacity to withstand incidents at a national level or as he refers to *'exogenous shocks'* which have the potential to develop in local communities and result in communal conflict.

If we look at Ballynafeigh for example, there have been numerous occasions throughout the last thirty years that conflict related incidents have impacted on Northern Ireland, and resulted in widespread disorder i.e. Drumcree. However, behaviour in Ballynafeigh did not mirror that of other areas within Northern Ireland. It is possible to conclude that the

associational forms of engagement, namely the housing associations, the Clergy Fellowship, the local community development association and sports club provided the necessary structures to inadvertently offer stability to the community and created the environment where everyday forms of engagement could continue.

There were elements of Varshney's approach evident within each of the areas studied. He placed a large degree of importance on small scale, highly localised interventions. These initiatives would involve local people and offer some form of leadership to the wider community. In each of the three areas there were individuals involved in community-led initiatives trying to promote and regenerate their areas. In Rathfriland there was the Regeneration Group, Areema the Residents' Association and in Ballynafeigh the Community Development Association. These groups involved local people and were largely representative of the communities they were based in. Local residents could see people from different community backgrounds working together on singular issues that impacted on everyone. Varshney felt that it was important for people to be constantly reassured, and visibly shown that people could work together. It was more about trust and sending out the correct signals and reinforcing the local social ties than group participation.

Naydes et al (1998) examined fourteen diverse neighbourhoods in the USA, with the aim of finding what mechanisms worked in order to keep the areas stable. One of the key findings was that no two communities were fully alike and what worked in one area wouldn't necessarily work in another. This was similar to the research. Although key themes were evident in each of the three communities, the internal social dynamics in each area were very different. Naydes did however note a number of significant characteristics in each of the study areas, one of which was the presence of 'Social Seams', points in the community where interaction between different groups is sewn together. Reflecting on our own research it was apparent that these social seams also existed within the three communities. There were a number of social and sports clubs that all sections of the community could join, community associations, residents' groups, and leisure facilities. The groups and/or environments were viewed as crucial in both facilitating integration but also creating a common bond that bound people together and sustained the 'sense of community'.

It has generally been accepted by theorists such as Putnam (2000) and Varshney (2002) that strong civic institutions with a local base are crucial in 'binding social networks together' and projecting an image of

tolerance, trust and respect for the wider community. It was interesting to note that within two of the communities researched for this study, Ballynafeigh and Rathfriland, the local churches exercised prominent roles in the lives of many of the residents.

The particular importance of churches as civic institutions is argued for by Putnam (2000). He claimed that congregations generate both 'civically relevant values' such as public duty, compassion and concern for the excluded, and 'civic skills' such as association and organisation. Furthermore, according to Ahmed (2001) and Sweeney et al (2001) churches provide a distinctive function in creating a sense of spiritual well being, self-esteem and identity for individuals and communities. During the fieldwork stage of the research in the aforementioned communities, it was apparent that the churches and local clergy were prominent throughout. They had a degree of influence in a number of community projects and did not restrict their roles to purely religious tasks. The local residents acknowledged the impact that the churches had in the community, and felt that they facilitated the development and strengthening of relationships.

One of the direct consequences of the Troubles was the increase in segregated living. For this reason it was assumed that levels of bonding social capital were high within the single identity groups. Community background shaped people's lives: where they could travel, work or socialise and who they could associate with. The impact of this was that bonding social capital flourished due to an over reliance on people from the same community background as themselves. This was negated by a decline in bridging social capital as people often limited themselves to staying within the social and economic confines of their own community. This assumption is true for segregated housing areas in Northern Ireland. However, in the mixed areas analysed for this research there appeared to be a fair degree of bridging social capital evident. The fact that people from different community backgrounds worked together to promote their communities, sat on management groups together and generally lived in harmony was evidence that bridging social capital was stronger in these types of communities. What makes it interesting is that in areas such as Ballynafeigh there are a number of organisations and institutions that continue to present themselves as singular groups i.e. the Orange Order, but this does not have a negative impact overall on levels of bridging social capital in the area.

According to Putnam (2000) communities that have high levels of social capital benefit more so than those that don't. There is considerable

evidence that communities with a good 'stock' of social capital are more likely to benefit from lower crime figures, better health, higher educational achievement, and better economic growth (World Bank 1999). The research findings from the three mixed areas illustrated the benefits that local residents felt they experienced from residing in those particular areas, including: a strong sense of health and social well-being, freedom of movement, an attractive area to live in. It should be noted that in the case of Northern Ireland the majority of existing mixed areas would not necessarily be classified as working class communities, therefore the benefits that many would attribute to high levels of social capital may in fact be the result of social class.

Is it Northern Ireland's aspiration to have a diverse community consisting of residents from Catholic, Protestant and minority ethnic backgrounds? A society free from sectarian, racist and homophobic attacks and intimidation? A place where all feel safe from harm? Is the vision of an integrated community a place where diversity outweighs neutrality? A place where the Sash plays alongside the Soldier's Song and the Tricolour flies beside the Union Jack? Is this realistic for the future? The reason these questions have been posed is because, for the most part, people are unclear about what they visualise an integrated or mixed community to be.

It is very difficult to aspire to something when people don't actually know what they are trying to achieve. In the three areas that were studied, none of the above wish list actually existed, yet residents perceived their communities as mixed. People often talk about socially engineering communities to make them more balanced, and create an environment where principles of respect, tolerance and neutrality are adhered to. However, society should first begin by setting realistic goals and then creating environments where people are free to live in places of their own choice. Following on from this, mechanisms should be introduced that encourage integration and mixing. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the individual to actively participate in an environment where mixing is the norm, this can be facilitated but not engineered. Finally by labelling areas as integrated or mixed, you are running the risk of placing them under added pressure, where any incident will be scrutinised for religious and/or ethnic connotations.

Recommendations

1. **A consultation should be embarked on to debate and devise a standard terminology to be used in discussions on shared living:** Throughout this report reference is made to integrated living and levels of mixing between people from different community backgrounds. It was evident that for many residents living in a community that they perceived as mixed, defining what constituted mixed was problematic. Furthermore, from an observer's view, levels of integration may have been higher in one community than another, yet residents in both areas indicated equal levels of community integration. Therefore, moving away from these terms of reference may lessen expectations of what a mixed community should be. Instead, referring to a place where people from Protestant, Catholic and minority ethnic community backgrounds can live together as a shared environment may decrease the pressure on existing residents and limit the expectations of what such a community should be.

2. **Any future polices relating to shared living should have at the fore elements of choice and opportunity:** People have to want to live in a shared environment. This cannot be forced upon them. Furthermore, there have to be a number of shared housing schemes developed so that people have the opportunity to choose to live in one. The NIHE are currently supporting research that is examining potential areas for shared living within Northern Ireland. This is an important first step in developing future areas that could facilitate shared living. The Community Cohesion Unit is also implementing mixed housing pilot schemes. It will be interesting to note the impact of these schemes on both the residents and the wider community. It is also important to limit the expectations from these schemes, regardless of success or failure, lessons will be learnt which will provide further information on shared living.

3. **Any schemes relating to shared living should involve the implementation and support of programmes and initiatives that improve and sustain community development:** A crucial component of any mixed area is the existence of local organisations and groups that deal with issues that both impact and are shared by the whole community. This in turn aids in the development of a 'strong sense of community' for the local residents. It is important to build up the civic infrastructure through community interactions and partnerships with local residents and statutory and community groups. This has also to be replicated at a political level, through

councillors and local political representatives. Within each of the areas examined there was evidence of high levels of cross-cutting community activity with groups, projects and activities maintaining a degree of co-operation and communication between those from different community and ethnic backgrounds. In most cases there was an over-arching group, consisting of local people that represented an important structure within the community, providing a degree of leadership and an opportunity for local people to engage on issues that impacted on their lives.

4. **Current strategic policy commitments should be translated into operational action:** Along with a Shared Future the Government has launched the Triennial Action Plan, which has detailed headline commitments that each Government Department has guaranteed in order to implement and deliver a Shared Future for Northern Ireland. There is a degree of clarity needed regarding these actions and a more planned, joined up and comprehensive approach is required on the issue of shared living. It is crucial that DSD's Neighbourhood Renewal policy initiative along with Community Planning by the new councils under RPA recognise the complex nature of shared living and take on board current research findings.

5. **Future policies relating to shared living must recognise the importance of key agents of interaction that facilitate mixing:** The research findings have illustrated the different social, economic and leisure activities that together enhance the potential for fostering relationships in the community. Furthermore, the environments in which these activities are set assist in sustaining existing relationships within the community. Through the research it was acknowledged local residents associated themselves with these types of groups, and their importance in increasing levels of social bonding and bridging throughout the community cannot be understated.

6. **The development of shared living must incorporate the creation of shared space within the community:** It was noted on numerous occasions that residents acknowledged the importance of environments and structures within their community that could be accessed by everyone regardless of community background. This created the space where people could meet and interact, foster and sustain relationships. This type of shared space is crucial in providing an opportunity, not only for people of different community backgrounds to meet, but also long term and relatively new residents. It was evident from the research that one key inhibitor for

relationship building was length of residency in a community. The creation of an environment owned by the community would create the mechanism where people could begin to establish social networks within the area.

7. **A special focus should be placed on programmes and initiatives that develop and sustain relationships between young people from different ethnic and community backgrounds:** It was apparent that although the majority of adults perceived their communities as mixed, young people held very different perceptions. Within their communities there were a lack of facilities or organised programmes that encouraged mixing. Often they attended different schools and socialised with young people of a similar community background. Issues around flags and band parades appeared to have a greater impact on young people compared to adults, possibly due to the fact that adults had more opportunities to interact and mix together. Structures and mechanisms need to be put in place to bring young people together within the one environment to encourage a sense of sharing, and allow for relationships to be built.

8. **There is a need to develop indicators that measure the health, social and economic well-being of communities.** Any future policies relating to mixed housing need to take into consideration those areas that are segregated. It is important that these communities are not left behind and the focus is simply on designing shared communities. Therefore a list of indicators should be developed that measure the quality of life for residents within all areas of Northern Ireland. These indicators would allow for comparisons to be made between shared and segregated communities, but would also allow for community and resident associations to identify potential problems and issues manifesting within their community and attempt to address them. Furthermore a mapping exercise throughout Northern Ireland should be conducted to include those estates already integrated; those estates where a strategic approach to integration could be implemented; and those estates where integration would prove extremely difficult.

9. **Any future policies and action should include communities who already identify themselves as mixed:** As the research has shown there are a number of mixed communities in existence within Northern Ireland. It has also become apparent that changing demographics have the potential to 'tip' a community from mixed to being dominated by one community background. There is no

distinct equation or figure that once crossed will result in a community tipping from mixed to being dominated by one particular group. However communities need to be aware of the changing demographics within their community and the impact they have on the overall numerical balance in the area.

10. **All communities should have an opportunity to participate in mediation and community relations training:** Within the three study areas it was apparent that issues around flags and parades had the potential to manifest themselves into community relation issues. For the most part communities had established groups to engage on the issues and find a common ground that was acceptable to the majority of the community. There was no generic approach to managing these topics, and they appeared to be handled on a year-to-year basis. It is important that individuals have the necessary skills and support to address them in a structured and coherent manner. Mediation training is one potential method of supporting the community through the problematic field of cultural symbols, flags and band parades. Furthermore, communities should be made aware of the Joint Protocol which addresses the flying of flags, particularly those that show support for proscribed organisations.

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This report is the result of a qualitative study into three mixed residential communities in Northern Ireland. The research findings provide an analysis of the quality of life issues and the nature of social relationships in mixed communities. Through a number of interviews and focus groups residents from both urban and rural mixed communities discussed the social dynamics that exist, and the agents of integration that facilitated a sense of sharing within their communities. The findings reveal indicators of shared living and factors that can hinder the development of relationship building between people from different community backgrounds. Furthermore, the research offered an opportunity to explore the value and relevance of the theoretical concepts of bonding, bridging and linking social capital in creating sustainable, integrated shared communities.

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Diversity Equity Interdependence

Community Relations Council

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