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Northern Ireland

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ARCHIVE

Cross-community integration and mixing: does it make a difference?

Dirk Schubotz
Gillian Robinson

Aim of Young Life and Times (2003-05)

- To monitor changing attitudes to community relations issues among 16-year olds across Northern Ireland
- To contribute to policy-making on community relations and evaluation of policy.

Aim of Northern Ireland Life and Times

- Monitor the attitudes and behaviour of people in Northern Ireland
- Time-series and public record of attitudes and behaviour
- Modular format

YLT:

Postal survey of all 16-year olds born in February who are on the CBR

Each year ca 2,000 16-year olds invited, return rate approximately 40%

NILT:

Annual household survey of 1,800 18+ year olds

A number of identical questions on community relations asked in YLT and NILT are the same

‘Cross-community schemes are generally available but only for a few people. So many teenagers who live in a predominantly Protestant/Catholic area have little chance of bridging the gap.’

Cross-community projects and contact by residential segregation

	%		
	Catholic area	Protestant area	Mixed area
Cross-community contact	71	77	85
Participation in cross-community projects	56	51	56

‘I think cross community projects should be introduced for adults as well as young people because they could help to resolve some of the problems with the troubles.’ (2005)

‘I think that relationships between contrasting communities in Northern Ireland are improving, especially between young people. I also think that this is to do with special programmes that schools are following, and getting involved in more inter community project.’ (2005)

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

‘Sometimes in the organised events to integrate Protestants and Catholics, it can feel like we're being pushed together by the government etc. and it's awkward - not always because of sectarian prejudices, but just because you know that you're automatically expected to get on with people you don't know!’ (2005)

Feelings towards other main religious community by attendance of cross-community projects and planned integrated schools.

CATHOLICS

	%		
	Favourable	Neither favourable nor unfavourable	Unfavourable
Taken part in cross-community event	42	49	9
Not taken part in cross-community event	33	54	13
Did attend planned integrated school	46	48	6
Did not attend planned integrated school	39	52	10

Feelings towards other main religious community by attendance of cross-community projects and planned integrated schools. PROTESTANTS

	%		
	Favourable	Neither favourable nor unfavourable	Unfavourable
Taken part in cross-community event	41	49	10
Not taken part in cross-community event	26	58	15
Did attend planned integrated school	43	51	6
Did not attend planned integrated school	36	52	12

‘I don't think relations between Protestants and Catholics will ever be better because everyone is being brought up in a prejudiced culture and the younger generations are being influenced by the older generations who already hold that attitude.’ (2004)

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

Most important influence on respondents' views on how they feel about other religious community

	%			
	Planned Integrated	Grammar	Secondary	All
Church	7	9	6	8
Family	27	47	47	45
School	24	7	9	9
Friends	21	19	19	19
Other	11	11	13	12
Don't know	7	4	5	5
Not answered	3	3	4	3

Respondents' attitudes towards members of the other main religious community by school type attended

	%		
	Planned Integrated	Grammar	Secondary
Catholics feeling favourably towards Protestants	46	41	38
Catholics feeling unfavourably towards Protestants	6	9	10
Protestant feeling favourably towards Catholics	43	38	33
Protestant feeling favourably towards Catholics	6	7	16

Comparison of NILT (2002-2004) and YLT (2003-2005)

1. Are community relations better now than 5 years ago?
2. Will community relations be better in 5 years time than they are now?
3. Will religion always make a difference to how people in Northern Ireland feel about each other?

‘As I am 16, I think our generation has bypassed the worst of the Troubles and so I don't think community relations are as bad as they seemed to be then.’
(2004)

‘I think they have improved. I mean they aren't perfect but at least bombs aren't going off in Belfast every day. I just hope we continue to try and make things better and peaceful for everyone.’ (2004)

YLT respondents saying that:

	Catholics	Protestants	No religion	All
Community relations are better now than they were 5 years ago	49	39	42	44
Community relations will be better in 5 years time than now	43	31	33	37
Religion will always make a difference	84	90	78	86

NILT respondents saying that:

	Catholics	Protestants	No religion	All
Community relations are better now than they were 5 years ago	48	41	43	44
Community relations will be better in 5 years time than now	55	42	48	47
Religion will always make a difference	82	86	77	84

‘If people were to work and learn in the same place, I think they would learn to get along better and leave their differences behind.’ (2005)

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

Preferences for religious mixing. YLT respondents:

	%			
	Catholics	Protestants	No religion	All
Neighbourhood	55	47	67	54
Workplace	70	67	77	70
School	36	47	71	45

Preferences for religious mixing. NILT respondents:

	%			
	Catholics	Protestants	No religion	All
Neighbourhood	80	70	83	75
Workplace	89	82	93	86
School	59	56	84	60

Preferences for religious mixing by participation in cross-community schemes and attendance of planned integrated schools

	%				
	Attended cross-community project	Did NOT attend cross-community project	Planned integrated school	Grammar school	Secondary school
Neighbourhood	56	41	76	55	50
Workplace	73	61	87	69	69
School	44	38	85	49	38

‘I think that today both religions are mixing more than ever. I think youth groups, schools and religious groups are to thank for this. Some families will always carry anger as a result of incidents which occurred during the troubles and this bitterness will be passed on from one generation to the next. However, today I think tension between each group has been reduced and people are mixing a lot better.’ (2005)

1. Participation in cross-community projects and attendance at integrated schools are closely related to positive feelings towards members of other religious community;
2. Those who attended cross-community projects or planned integrated schools were significantly more likely to favour mixed religion neighbourhoods, workplaces and schools;
3. Even though 16-year old YLT respondents have had more opportunities to mix than the adult population and have grown up in less violent times, they are less optimistic about community relations than NILT respondents.

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