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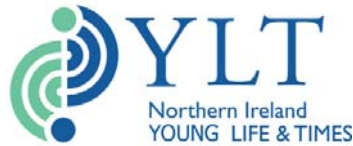
Cross Community Schemes: Participation, Motivation Mandate

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with

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Participation, motivation, mandate**

Final Project Report



Community Relations Council



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Introduction

Schemes to improve cross-community relations in Northern Ireland have been organised for decades. The majority of such programmes has taken place in schools and has been financed through the Department of Education or the Education and Library Boards. Participation here is mostly compulsory for pupils and the lack of choice has been shown to have some negative corollaries (O'Connor, Hartop and McCully 2003, Smith 1994). In the words of a 16 year old respondent from the 2007 Young Life and Times (YLT) survey:

'Cross-community projects will not work if people are forced to attend. People must want to attend and be open minded enough to give it a chance to work.'

Questions on community relations and cross-community contact were included on a regular basis in the YLT surveys (ARK 2003-2007). Despite the fact that participation in school-based cross-community schemes is not always voluntary, in research undertaken by us in the past we found that young people from both the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland who participated in cross-community projects or attended planned integrated schools had more positive attitudes towards the other main community (Table 1) and were also more likely to have friends from other communities (Table 2) (Schubotz and Robinson 2006).

Table 1: Feelings towards other main religious community by attendance of cross-community projects and mixed schools

| | % Feelings towards other religious community | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------|
| | Favourable | Neither favourable nor unfavourable | Unfavourable |
| Catholics | | | |
| 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 |
| Protestants | | | |
| 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 |

Source: Young Life and Times Survey, 2003-2005

In terms of how favourably Catholics viewed Protestants, there was a statistically significant difference between those who had attended cross-community schemes and

those who had not ($p=0.005^1$). Protestants who had attended cross-community schemes were also significantly more likely ($p<0.000$) to view Catholics more favourably than Protestants who had not participated in such schemes.

Table 2: Number of friends from the other main religious community by attendance of cross-community projects and mixed schools

| | % Number of friends | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----|-----|------|--------------|
| | None | One | 2-5 | 6-10 | More than 10 |
| Catholics | | | | | |
| Taken part in cross-community event | 33 | 8 | 28 | 10 | 16 |
| Not taken part in cross-community event | 46 | 10 | 22 | 6 | 10 |
| Did attend planned integrated school | 10 | 3 | 40 | 13 | 34 |
| Did not attend planned integrated school | 40 | 9 | 25 | 8 | 13 |
| Protestants | | | | | |
| Taken part in cross-community event | 24 | 8 | 31 | 13 | 19 |
| Not taken part in cross-community event | 33 | 10 | 29 | 10 | 10 |
| Did attend planned integrated school | 13 | 8 | 26 | 21 | 29 |
| Did not attend planned integrated school | 28 | 9 | 30 | 11 | 15 |

Source: Young Life and Times Survey, 2003-2005

In relation to the number of friends 16 year olds had, statistically, the difference between those attending cross-community projects was highly significant for both Catholics and Protestants ($p<0.002$ for both groups of young people). For Catholics, attending an integrated school was a stronger predictor of how many friends they had from other religious communities ($p<0.000$) than for Protestants ($p=0.041$), but statistically this difference was still significant among Protestants.

However a large number of cross-community schemes also take place outside of school: in statutory and voluntary youth groups; in community centres; in churches; or during sports activities. Without a doubt the main target group for cross-community schemes are young people, despite the fact that young people themselves have repeatedly expressed the opinion that young people may grow up with less staunch and biased views about people from other religious backgrounds if their parents' generation had been exposed to cross-community projects, as the following example from the 2007 YLT survey shows.

'It isn't the young people that have the "religion problem", it is the adults that have grown up during the height of the violence. Young people mix with other religions all the time now but there is still a small minority that don't. This is mostly because

¹ P is a measure of statistical significance. A value of $p=0.05$ or smaller represents a statistically significant connection of two variables, a value of $p=0.005$ or smaller shows a high significant relationship and a value of $p=0.001$ or smaller represents the significant relationship at the highest level.

their parents don't and won't let them be free to mix with different religions. It is adults that these cross community schemes should be set up for.'

We know from previous research undertaken that cross-community projects influence the views and attitudes of young people towards peers from different socio-religious backgrounds (Kelly 2002; Sinclair, Cole and Kelly 2004; Ewart and Schubotz et al. 2004) We also know from research that we undertook that participation in long-term cross-community projects can change attitudes of young people from socially disadvantaged and religiously segregated areas (Schubotz 2005). However, a number of questions remained unanswered in the previous YLT surveys that were conducted, for example:

1. What are young people's experiences of *participating* in cross-community schemes outside school? What is the duration and frequency of meetings in cross-community projects? What activities do such projects involve and to what extent are these activities young-people initiated, or at least to what extent do young people have *some* say about the content?
2. If they are not forced to attend, and the majority is clearly not, what are the *motivations* for young people to attend? Do young people feel that they as individuals crucially contribute to the success of the project?
3. And lastly, what is the *mandate* of youth workers to organise such schemes? What support do they receive in their communities?

Thus, the present mixed-methods project was designed to address these unanswered questions.

Methodology

A mixed-method approach was adopted to undertake the research with two interwoven parts:

- a) 15-20 questions on experiences of cross-community schemes asked in the 2007 Young Life and Time survey; and
- b) Five focus group discussions and four one-to-one interviews conducted in youth and community projects that were involved in cross-community work. This second part was undertaken with young people (peer researchers) who were involved in the cross-community projects they were investigating.

The two parts of the project were designed to complement each other.

The 2007 YLT survey was conducted in August and September 2007. Everyone living in Northern Ireland who celebrated their 16th birthday in February of the survey year and was registered to receive Child Benefit was invited to take part in the survey (For further technical details of the YLT survey, visit www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/datasets/techinfo.html). Of the 1,925 eligible 16 year olds, 627 responded to the survey, a response rate of 33 percent.

In the second part of the project, a group of eight young people were identified and recruited to work on the project as peer researchers. All eight were drawn from the YLT sample and were aged 16 at the start of the research. They had indicated on their completed questionnaire that they were interested in becoming a peer researcher and were involved in a range of cross-community activities.

Involving young researchers

Why involve young people in research? Young people are increasingly being consulted in social research, not only as participants but also in the design, delivery and dissemination of research. The level and depth of their involvement varies greatly (Hart 1992; Kirby 1999) but the drive for wider youth participation pervades law, policy and the research context (see: Hill 1997; Edwards and Alldred 1999; David *et al.* 2001; Curtis *et al.* 2004). It is widely accepted, therefore, that children's and young people's views and experiences are not only valid but *valued* in social research primarily because these views and experiences are distinct from those of adults.

As part of the 2007 YLT survey, participants were asked to detail their involvement in cross-community youth projects and were also requested that they note their interest in finding out more about peer research. While we were not faced with a hard-to-reach population as the research described by Elliott *et al.* (2001) the constraints on time, as a short-scale research project, made clear sense to co-opt young people already involved in cross-community projects and indeed this formed part of the recruitment process. This also assumed some level of understanding of cross-community work, what motivated individuals to become involved and also suggested that some level of personal experience would be reflected in their role as young researchers and peer researchers. It made perfect sense to recruit a small group of participants in the YLT survey to investigate experiences of cross-community schemes emanating from 2007 YLT's findings. The self-selecting young people fulfilled the criteria of active involvement in cross-community work, had an implicit understanding of the organisation they would be tasked with finding more about and could relate to the motivations of people involved in this type of work. They also had privileged access to an established network of cross-community project personnel and participants.

Recruitment

The 2007 YLT questionnaire contained a section with a number of questions on community relations issues. After this section, we had inserted the following paragraph in the questionnaire:

Later this year, we would like to explore young people's experiences of taking part in cross-community projects further. If you are currently involved in such a project anywhere in Northern Ireland, we can give you the exciting opportunity to work alongside us on this. You would receive some basic research training and would get the chance to talk to other people involved in projects like yours. We would also pay you £250 and give you a certificate if you are involved.

If you would like to receive more information on how to become a peer researcher on this project, please tick this box and fill in your contact details at the end of the questionnaire.

All YLT respondents who said they were interested in receiving more information *and* who had previously stated in the questionnaire that they were currently involved in a cross-community project were sent a brief project information sheet and a short application form and asked to complete some questions detailing their involvement in cross-community work and explaining why they would be interested in becoming a peer researcher. Altogether 34 such letters were sent out to YLT respondents. A

number of applications were received and reflected a diverse range of cross-community involvement across Northern Ireland.

What motivated these young people to apply for the young researcher project? The applications reflected a range of different motivations for their involvement ranging from career-related aspirations,

'I am interested in becoming a lawyer or social worker, I would like to specialise in children's law. Also I was a victim of bullying at school and I would like to stop this happening to others.'

personal development,

'I would like to broaden my perspective of the other side of the community but I feel that my values, beliefs and morals should also be respected as my beliefs will remain unchanged.'

and a desire to action social change,

'I believe that young people [should be] consulted and well-represented when important issues are raised and I would be thrilled to be part of this and to collect their opinions, giving them a voice in society. I think it is important to hear what we have to say because we are the future decision-makers and it's best if what we say is fair to all.'

Applicants were also asked to consider why they felt they would make a successful young researcher and again they approached their involvement with quite different motivations, relating to personal and career development or social action but also considered it an opportunity to build on their existing qualities revealing a distinct confidence in their own skills and abilities which could benefit the project:

'I have the capacity to learn, I do not wish to grow up living a prejudiced life.'

'I am patient, articulate and easy to talk to. As a survivor of bullying, I believe I could help a wide range of people. I also feel that Northern Ireland is now changing and feel that it is up to the young people of our society to seize this opportunity denied to our parents to develop a kind society.'

'I'm interested in furthering my knowledge in all aspects of cross-community. I'm also studying Business Studies at AS Level and I feel it would mutually benefit the project by using my researching and analytical skills and put them into practice.'

'I have a rapport with my peers and I enjoy putting my leadership skills to good use. I always make sure that everyone's opinion is heard in conversation and I would love to be a part of something that will so greatly impact the future – making life better for everyone.'

Eight young people were successful at this application stage and were invited to attend the training day and were also sent information about the payment (£250) and certification they would receive on successful completion of the project.

Training

Drawing on material from Kirby (1999) and Save the Children (2000), the one-day training session covered research ethics, confidentiality and then concentrated on the practical skills required for facilitating focus groups. Time was also set aside to discover more about each young person and the project or activities they were involved with. An hour-long session was spent considering the key research questions drawn from the 2007 YLT survey. It was also important to spend some time discussing the practical details about what we were asking them to do and draw up a checklist of the next steps they needed to take once the training had been completed.

The successful applicants were drawn from across Northern Ireland, four from Belfast City, one from Derry City and the other three hailed from three rural locations in counties Armagh and Antrim. On public transport travelling to the training venue, four of the young people realised that they knew one other participant. This was unplanned and remarkable considering the total sample size (n=627). Although some friendships had already been established through their cross-community projects and sporting activities, it did not take long for the whole group to bond and by lunchtime the group went for a walk 'round the block' returning with mobile phone numbers exchanged, listening to music and swapping phone jokes. The group also teased each other about the differences in their regional accents, language, swapped exam and study details and there was a general sense at the end of the day that they were looking forward to meeting up again, excited by the work that lay ahead.

The group was split up into four geographic teams: two Belfast-based; one in Armagh and; one in Derry. The Belfast projects naturally split into two people per team but, due to logistical difficulties, the project activist in Armagh worked on her own and the three young people from Co Antrim and Derry worked together.

Managing contact

Following the training, correspondence was sent to each participant asking them to reflect on the initial training session. If still interested in being involved, they were asked to sign and return a 'contract'. This pack also included a detailed step-by-step task list outlining each charge they had been assigned, including relevant contact details and key dates. They were also given an interview schedule for the project staff interview and a number of activities and themed questions to be used for their focus group work. These were all provided as suggestions and each team was invited to use their own materials or add to the ones we had developed as props. Each team was also

provided with participant information sheets and a copy of the confidentiality policy which were to be used during fieldwork.

Once this detailed pack had been sent, contact was maintained primarily through text messages. The group was often difficult to contact during normal working hours because of mobile phone restrictions in school, sporting activities and part-time jobs after school. Text messaging proved reliable as they were asked to acknowledge receipt of messages and often responses were extremely quick and provided adequate detail. However, as other research has discovered, we had to rely on phones having adequate funds to reply (Kilpatrick *et al*, 2007a). Some of the group had difficulty getting in touch with their team members, in one case it was due to low phone credit but in the other case the peer researcher dropped out and we have no further information as to why this may have been.

Text message reminders, e-mails and phone calls were used to update the team about their project timetable and to encourage them to set up meetings and phone calls. We also know that each team used texting to recruit and remind their focus group participants about the planned session. One cross-community project provided access to a computer and phone for one group to organise their focus group. The peer researchers also used texting to update the research team about meeting dates and directions and once again the mobile phone proved vital in maintaining contact.

Data collection

Each team member involved in the focus group and project interviews demonstrated maturity and approached each task with confidence. Each facilitator/interviewer drew heavily on the materials we had developed and did not stray from the list of suggested questions and focus group topics we had provided in their correspondence pack. All focus groups and interviews were observed by one of the 'adult' researchers and were recorded using a digital voice recorder.

The project staff interviews lasted on average 20 minutes each and although all questions on the interview schedule were posed to the interviewees, some responses could have been probed and expanded on further. The young researchers had not spent a lot of time preparing and reviewing their questions and were encouraged to read through the schedule and agree roles and responsibilities before they started. Most of them had an established relationship with the project staff and felt comfortable interviewing them in a familiar environment. In some cases once the interviews had been concluded, the research team offered additional questions to try

and cover areas where further information could have been added. On debriefing, the peer researchers were pleased with their input, had enjoyed the experience and felt some sense of achievement.

Focus groups

In total, five focus groups were held and ranged from three to ten participants lasting between 25-60 minutes. Some of the peer researchers faced difficulties organising the sessions and felt frustrated when people failed to attend, on the whole, the peer researcher teams worked well and were able to galvanise support and interest in the topic area.

Each focus group (except for one focus group that had only three participants) started off with a series of ice breakers based on a cross-community theme. The peer researchers managed this introduction with an enthusiastic and skilful approach and were able to move on to the discussion areas with confidence. Once again, they relied heavily on the materials provided but showed ability in facilitating and recording the debate. At times they were faced with having to refocus the discussion on the assigned topic areas but they did this without alienating the group. The 'adult' researchers did at times assist with this and also offered additional probes to encourage further discussion around the key points.

Data analysis

During the first training session we timetabled an additional half-day session to analyse the data collected in the project staff interviews and focus groups. Each peer researcher team had been asked to send an electronic copy of the notes and reflections on their fieldwork. The research assistant transcribed the digital data and circulated this to the peer researcher teams in preparation for the data analysis day.

In order to augment the data collected on fieldwork, we used the data analysis session to reflect on the work they had conducted in their own project focus groups and asked one of the young researchers to facilitate a focus group which revisited the series of topics they had put to their participants. This was a useful exercise and managed to draw out a lot of additional detail on some of the discussions that had taken place in the focus groups it also gave the young researchers an opportunity to reflect on their own project and their involvement and motivation.

Report writing and dissemination

Following the data analysis session, a draft summary of the findings was circulated to the peer researcher team for comment and three peer researchers returned comments about the style and content of the summary research update which were incorporated into the final version. The whole team of peer researchers also presented the findings at the official launch of the report and delivered a PowerPoint presentation about the research and discussed their involvement in the project. They were also tasked with reporting findings to their respective cross-community projects.

Reflections of peer researchers

At the end of the data analysis session peer researchers were asked once again to reflect on what had prompted them to find out more about the young researcher project; some cited encouragement from a parent or teacher, others felt that it would enhance their CV or UCAS² application. The cross-community theme also held their interest and most of them felt it was an opportunity *'too good to be missed'*.

Once given further details about the project, they also admitted that the financial incentive had also encouraged their involvement. When asked why they thought we had been asked to be involved, they felt they could relate much better to that age group by having a young person's perspective. By co-opting them we were 'going straight to the source'. They also felt that 16 was an important age – it was a time for opinion forming and one peer researcher felt that they had *'done some living'* by that age. Their expectations of the project at the outset were reasonably low, *'I had no notion'*, *'I thought it would be boring'*, but from the feedback they were surprised how enjoyable their work had been:

'It's far better than I thought it would have been.' [chorus of agreement]

'It's quite like chilled.'

'More relaxed.'

'And people talk straight too.'

Their involvement has also changed their views of research in a positive way,

'I just thought it was going to be about statistics, you know 60% of young people this ...that's what I thought that this was going to be.'

² UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admission Service) is the UK central organisation through which applications are processed for entry to higher education.

Another peer researcher explains:

‘It’s a lot more relaxed, I always imagine research as interviews, I didn’t really think about people having conversations.’

‘And it’s far better sitting down and talking about it.’

When asked to reflect on the experience of organising and managing the fieldwork, they all found the work rewarding, if stressful at times, and all were able to discuss expansively about the new skills they felt that they had gained including organisational skills, new confidence and listening and communication skills which helped to encourage all participants to become involved in the focus group discussions. They also felt that running the ice breakers had been good experience and would be easy to draw on again in the future.

What do young researchers and adult researchers do differently?

As young researchers, they agreed that their ability to relate to their peer group was a powerful advantage, and their listening skills, understanding slang all helped them to relate effectively and gain easy access to other young people involved in the focus groups. It also helped that they had regular contact with the group, either bumping into them in town or regularly texting participants; they were closer ‘to the ground’.

In contrast, the young researchers considered the ‘adult’ team members to have better success in keeping order, retaining the focus of the discussions and an ability to succinctly conclude the discussions. They also referred to a sense of authority due to both age and familiarity with the research process and the subject area.

Participation - Findings from the 2007 YLT survey

Experience of participation in community relations projects

The first question we asked was whether respondents had ever taken part in a cross-community project outside school. In total four in ten respondents (40%) said they had done so. Catholics (45%) were just a little more likely than Protestants (41%) to say that they had attended such projects. Three in ten respondents who had ever attended such projects were also currently involved in cross-community schemes. This means that approximately 12 percent of all 2007 YLT respondents were involved in cross-community projects outside of school at the time the survey was conducted. The proportion of Catholics that were currently involved in such projects was somewhat higher than the proportion of Protestants (34% and 26% respectively).

Statistically, there was no significant relationship between respondents' socio-economic background, which we measured through questions on respondents' family financial background, and their participation in cross-community projects outside school. However, as Table 3 shows, respondents who came from not well-off family backgrounds were somewhat more likely to have ever participated in cross-community projects outside school and to have been involved in such projects at the time the 2007 YLT survey was conducted.

Table 3: Participation in cross-community events outside school by family financial background

| | % | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|----------|-----|
| | Not well off | Average well off | Well off | All |
| Ever participated in cross-community projects | 43 | 38 | 40 | 39 |
| Currently involved in such programmes | 36 | 29 | 25 | 29 |

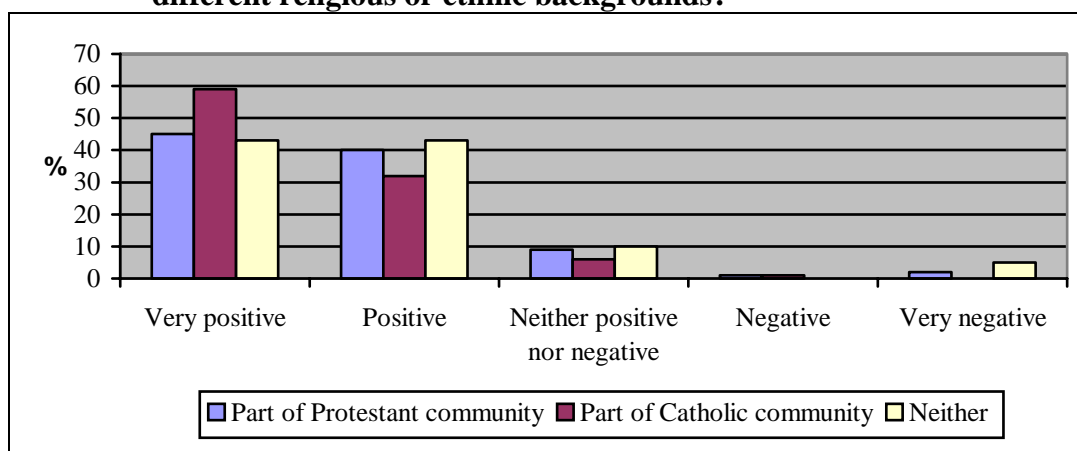
This finding relates well to a study recently undertaken by the Institute of Conflict Research which found that people living in religiously mixed and financially prosperous neighbourhoods were much less likely than people living in working class areas to be involved in cross-community projects (Byrne 2007).

We also tested the hypothesis that people positively predisposed to socio-religious mixing – for example by the fact that they live in a religiously mixed neighbourhood – are more inclined to attend cross-community projects. We found that people living in predominantly Catholic areas are just as likely to attend cross-community projects as people in predominantly Protestant areas or young people from religiously mixed

areas. However, we did find a difference between the religious mix of respondents' neighbourhood and the type of school they attended. Only six percent of respondents from predominantly Catholic areas attended schools which they said had an intake of approximately half Protestant and half Catholic pupils. This compares with ten percent of respondents from predominantly Protestant areas and 15 percent from religiously mixed areas. This difference was statistically significant ($p=0.000$).

The vast majority of respondents described the contact they had with people from different religious or ethnic backgrounds during the latest cross-community project they took part in as positive, as Figure 1 shows. In total, 88 percent of respondents described their contact as positive or very positive. Only four respondents in the whole sample described their contact as negative or very negative. Those who said they were part of the Catholic community saw their contact somewhat more positively than members of the Protestant community and those who said they were neither, but statistically this difference was not significant. This also held true when religious belonging rather than community background was used as a test variable.

Figure 1: Thinking about the most recent cross- community project you took part in, how would you describe your contact with people from different religious or ethnic backgrounds?



Most respondents said that they were at least to some extent actively involved in the organisation and running of the recent cross-community project they were involved in. Nearly two thirds (65%) of all respondents who had participated in a cross-community project outside school said they had been actively involved to some extent or more. There was no statistical difference between Catholics and Protestants in terms of how actively they were engaged in cross-community projects.

Ninety-six percent of respondents who said they were personally to a great deal or quite a lot involved in the community relations project also reported very positive or

positive experiences from this project. However, nearly nine in ten respondents (89%) who said they were not very much or not at all actively engaged in these programmes also reported positive contact experiences.

Attitudes towards community relations programmes

Since 2003, when the YLT survey was conducted in its current format for the first time, respondents were invited to comment on community relations. Each year YLT asks the following open-ended question:

'Is there anything else you would like to say about community relations in Northern Ireland?'

About one third of respondents each year use this opportunity to state their views on and experiences of community relations. From 2003-2006 over 1,000 of such diverse comments and statements had been collected in the YLT surveys. Participants in the 2007 survey were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with five of these statements from previous YLT respondents. These statements were:

- 1. 'If more cross-community projects were formed relations between different religions would be better.'**
- 2. 'Sometimes cross-community events can feel awkward - not because of sectarian prejudices, but because you are automatically expected to get on with people you don't know.'**
- 3. 'The sectarian hatred is now being directed towards minority ethnic communities, especially foreign workers coming into Northern Ireland.'**
- 4. 'Most people would like to have more friends of a different religion, but never have the opportunity.'**
- 5. 'No amount of money-grabbing cross-community projects will unite the two sides. Even if they were somehow magically reunited, people would find something else to stir up trouble.'**

Tables 4a-e show the results broken down by school type and attendance of cross-community projects.

Over eight in ten respondents (82%) agreed or strongly agreed that relations between different religions would be better if there were more community relations projects (Table 4a). Support for this view was strongest among respondents who currently attended cross-community projects outside school (61% agreeing strongly) and pupils who attended planned integrated schools (52% agreeing).

Table 4a: ‘If more cross-community projects were formed relations between different religions would be better. Respondents agreeing.

| | % | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------|-----------|--------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------|----|--------------|
| | School Type | | | Ever attended cross-community scheme | | Currently attends cross-community scheme | | All |
| | Planned Integrated | Grammar | Secondary | Yes | No | Yes | No | |
| Strongly agree | 52 | 31 | 41 | 48 | 29 | 61 | 42 | 36 |
| Agree | 29 | 52 | 41 | 40 | 49 | 28 | 45 | 46 |
| Neither | 10 | 13 | 11 | 8 | 15 | 5 | 9 | 12 |
| Disagree | 10 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Strongly disagree | 0 | <1 | 1 | <1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Don’t know | 0 | 0 | 1 | <1 | <1 | 0 | 1 | <1 |

The second statement in the 2007 YLT survey referred to one of the challenges of cross-community events, i.e. the challenge to make community relations events a positive experience for participants. The statement implies that the social expectation to get on with people from different religious backgrounds during cross-community projects may lead to difficult situations if this positive relationship building does not happen – for whatever reason this may be.

Table 4b shows that nearly three quarters (71%) of YLT respondents shared the view that the set-up of cross-community projects can create awkward feelings because of the assumptions that are being made about how well people will get on. Interestingly, the proportion of respondents agreeing strongly with the statement was largest among 16 year olds who attended planned integrated schools, arguably the young people who have the most contact with people from other religious and ethnic backgrounds. One possible explanation for this could be that for pupils from planned integrated schools there has been a normalisation and de-sensitisation of cross-community contact, so that they are more aware of ‘ordinary’ issues that may result in a failure of cross-community projects.

Table 4b: Sometimes cross-community events can feel awkward - not because of sectarian prejudices, but because you are automatically expected to get on with people you don't know. Respondents agreeing.

| | School Type | | | Ever attended cross-community scheme | | Currently attends cross-community scheme | | All |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------|-----------|--------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------|----|-----------|
| | Planned Integrated | Grammar | Secondary | Yes | No | Yes | No | |
| Strongly agree | 33 | 19 | 15 | 14 | 18 | 11 | 15 | 17 |
| Agree | 48 | 58 | 52 | 58 | 52 | 57 | 58 | 54 |
| Neither | 5 | 13 | 21 | 16 | 19 | 16 | 16 | 17 |
| Disagree | 5 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 11 | 6 | 6 |
| Strongly disagree | 10 | 3 | <1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Don't know | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

The third statement related to a relatively new dimension of cross-community contact in Northern Ireland, namely the increase in the number of people from minority ethnic communities and migrant workers living in Northern Ireland. Over the past few years, an increasing number of YLT respondents had expressed their concern about poor relations between predominantly white Irish or white British people born and raised in Northern Ireland and in particular migrant workers. As Table 4c shows, two thirds of respondents to the 2007 YLT survey shared the concern that hatred is directed towards minority ethnic communities and foreign workers. Again, respondents from planned integrated schools were significantly more likely to agree strongly with this statement than respondents who attended other types of school. The YLT survey cannot conclusively explain this. The attendance of cross-community projects did not impact on 16 year olds' views in relation to this statement.

Table 4c: The sectarian hatred is now being directed towards minority ethnic communities, especially foreign workers coming into Northern Ireland. Respondents agreeing.

| | School Type | | | Ever attended cross-community scheme | | Currently attends cross-community scheme | | All |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------|-----------|--------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------|----|-----------|
| | Planned Integrated | Grammar | Secondary | Yes | No | Yes | No | |
| Strongly agree | 62 | 26 | 26 | 30 | 25 | 32 | 29 | 27 |
| Agree | 14 | 46 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 41 | 41 | 42 |
| Neither | 10 | 14 | 19 | 16 | 18 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| Disagree | 5 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 5 | 8 |
| Strongly disagree | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Don't know | 5 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 5 |

We received a large number of open responses from YLT respondents that fitted well with the statistical results in Table 4c. The examples below represent some of the views expressed:

‘There will always be problems about community relations in NI. It used to be Catholics and Protestants fighting each other. Now the foreign workers are the subject of abuse.’

‘Yes truthfully I don't mind Catholics. They are just like Protestants except they believe something different but I don't like the foreign workers for the simple fact they're taking jobs and blowing stuff up. I really do wonder where their loyalties lie in our country or their own.’

‘I don't think that enough is being done to improve community relations in NI. There has been a large increase recently of Eastern Europeans coming to work in NI. I welcome them and feel that they are needed to work here but I don't think they have been given enough help to integrate into our society. I also think that people from NI should be better educated on what they bring to NI and how necessary they are to become a more prosperous place. I feel that this would help reduce any tensions that exist towards people from ethnic minorities.’

The fourth statement related the participation in cross-community projects to the fact of residential and educational segregation in Northern Ireland. A number of respondents to YLT surveys in the past had commented that they lived in single-religion neighbourhoods and attended single-religion schools and therefore simply had not the chance to make friends from other religious backgrounds. Table 4d shows that nearly half (49%) of all respondents agreed that people lack the opportunity to have more friends of a different religion.

Table 4d: Most people would like to have more friends of a different religion, but never have the opportunity. Respondents agreeing.

| | School Type | | | Ever attended cross-community scheme | | Currently attends cross-community scheme | | All |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------|-----------|--------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------|----|-----------|
| | Planned Integrated | Grammar | Secondary | Yes | No | Yes | No | |
| Strongly agree | 24 | 14 | 16 | 19 | 13 | 20 | 19 | 15 |
| Agree | 29 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 34 | 45 | 31 | 34 |
| Neither | 14 | 24 | 28 | 23 | 26 | 22 | 24 | 26 |
| Disagree | 29 | 20 | 11 | 15 | 17 | 8 | 18 | 16 |
| Strongly disagree | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Don't know | 0 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4 |

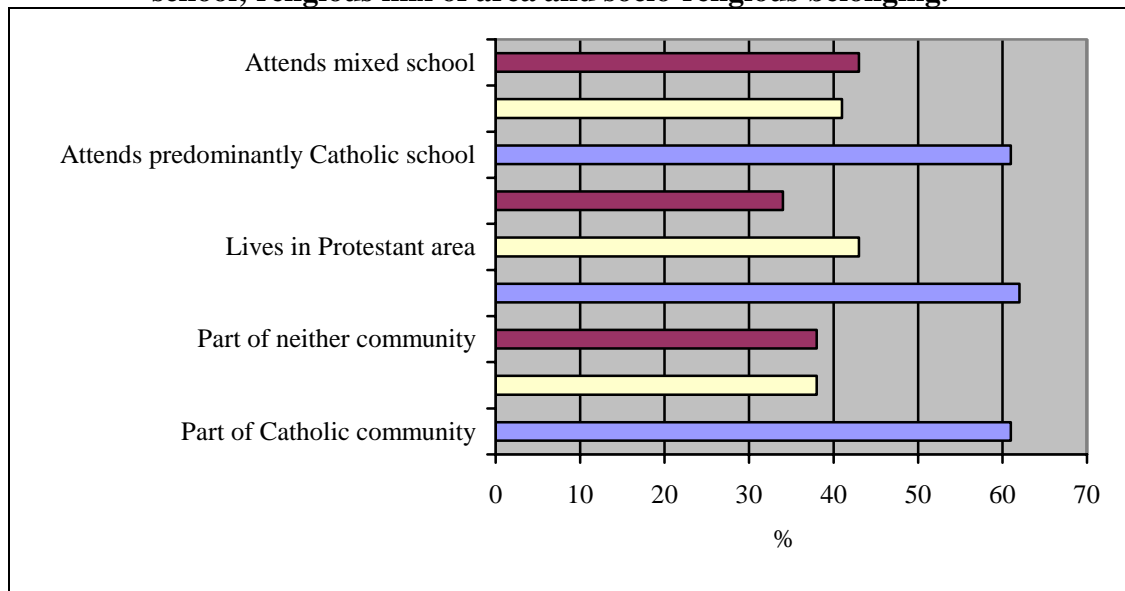
Pupils attending planned integrated schools were more likely than any other category of young people to disagree with this statement, but there was no statistical difference in the views of people who had attended cross-community schemes and those who had not. Again a number of comments were received in the YLT survey in relation to

this issue, such as the following which addresses the lack of local opportunities to mix.

‘There really should be more cross community youth clubs and schools and neighbourhoods in Derry. There is only on cross community club called REACH Across and there is only 2 cross community schools.’

Respondents who regarded themselves as members of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland were significantly more likely to agree with the view that people lacked the opportunity to meet friends from different religious backgrounds than respondents who said they belonged to the Protestant community and those who saw themselves as neither (Figure 2). This was reflected by two other statistics related to residential and educational segregation. Firstly, respondents living in mainly Catholic areas were *most* likely to agree with the view that people lacked the opportunity to have friends from other religious backgrounds (63%). Respondents living in mainly Protestants areas and mixed areas were much less likely to take this view (42% and 43% respectively). Secondly, respondents attending schools with an exclusive or mostly Catholic intake were also more likely to agree with the lack-of-opportunity statement than respondents attending schools with a predominantly or mostly Protestant intake or respondents attending mixed schools (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Respondents agreeing that most people don’t have the opportunity to meet friends from different religious backgrounds. By religious mix of school; religious mix of area and socio-religious belonging.



Interestingly, respondents living in small villages were just as likely as respondents living in cities to agree or disagree with the above statement, thus the view sometimes

expressed that rurality would decrease the opportunity for socio-religious mixing is certainly not supported by the 2007 YLT survey.

Similar to the first statement (Table 4a) the last statement related to the effectiveness of community relations projects. However, this statement had quite a negative slant and also included a monetary dimension, suggesting that no matter how well community relations projects were funded, they were not going to make a contribution to improved community relations. The results presented in Table 4e show that almost half (46%) of respondents agreed with this statement. Disagreement was strongest among respondents who were currently involved in cross-community projects (43%).

Table 4e: No amount of money-grabbing cross-community projects will unite the two sides. Even if they were somehow magically reunited, people would find something else to stir up trouble. Respondents agreeing.

| | School Type | | | Ever attended cross-community scheme | | Currently attends cross-community scheme | | All |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------|-----------|--------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------|----|-----------|
| | Planned Integrated | Grammar | Secondary | Yes | No | Yes | No | |
| Strongly agree | 19 | 11 | 15 | 12 | 14 | 8 | 14 | 14 |
| Agree | 29 | 31 | 34 | 29 | 34 | 30 | 29 | 32 |
| Neither | 10 | 21 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 18 | 25 | 21 |
| Disagree | 19 | 22 | 16 | 19 | 19 | 20 | 19 | 19 |
| Strongly disagree | 10 | 12 | 8 | 13 | 8 | 23 | 9 | 10 |
| Don't know | 14 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 4 |

Again, the comments received from YLT respondents confirmed the substantial scepticism among young people in relation to the effects of community relations programmes:

‘There is a lot of projects to do with community relations but there doesn't seem to be a positive outcome from the hard work going into the projects. There doesn't seem to be a focus on what should happen after projects are finished and how they should put what they have learnt into action and change NI for the better.’

‘The two sides will always have a problem with each other, no amount of activities can change that’

Together with the results from Tables 4a and 4b this suggests a multifaceted picture. Whilst the vast majority of respondents regards cross-community projects as beneficial for community cohesion in Northern Ireland, a large proportion of 16 year olds also view these projects as complex and demanding social events with potentially challenging situations and a limited capability to achieve long-lasting positive outcomes. There is evidence, however, that those involved in cross-community

projects and those attending planned integrated schools hold slightly more upbeat views on the positive prospects of cross-community projects as the results in Tables 4a-e show.

Friendship patterns

In terms of actual friendship patterns, previous YLT surveys suggested that cross-community integration and mixing resulted in more cross-community friendships for 16 year olds (Schubotz and Robinson 2006). As Table 5 shows, the 2007 survey strongly confirmed this finding. The proportions of respondents who said they had more than ten friends from other religious backgrounds were significantly higher among those who currently attended cross-community projects (51%). Only seven percent of respondents who currently attended cross-community schemes had no friend from other religious backgrounds compared to 32 percent of respondents who had never attended a cross-community project. The table shows that Catholics gain most from cross-community projects in terms of finding friends from their religious backgrounds. Catholics who never took part in cross-community schemes were most likely to say they had no friend from other religious backgrounds (37% giving this answer), but Catholics who were currently involved in such projects were also most likely to have ten or more friends from other religious backgrounds (54% saying this).

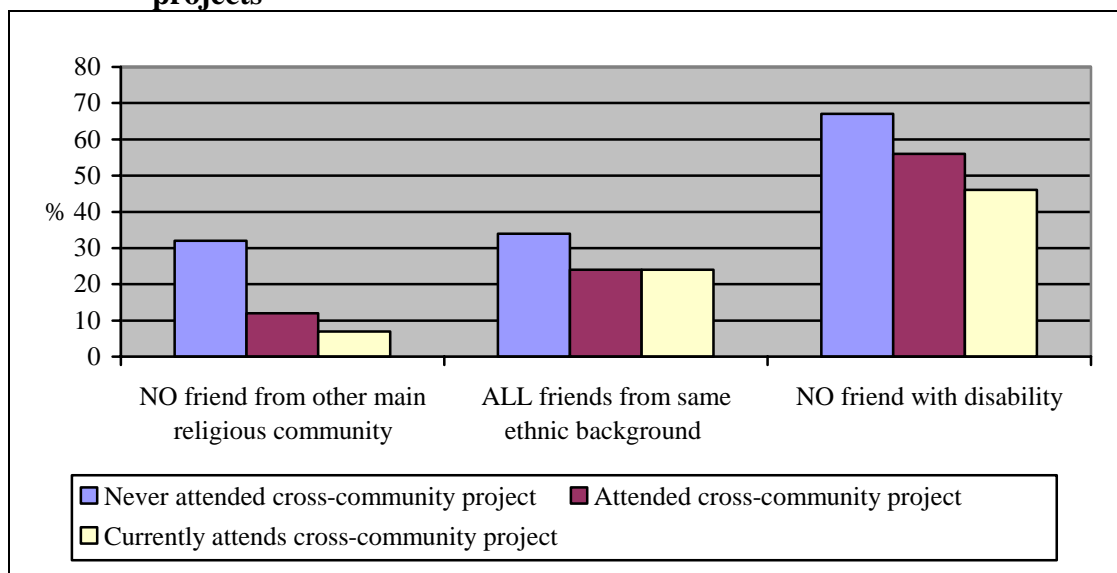
Table 5: Number of friends from the other main religious community by attendance of cross-community projects outside school (YLT 2007)

| | (%) | |
|-------------------------------------------|---------|--------------|
| | None | More than 10 |
| Catholics | | |
| Not taken part in cross-community event | 37 | 13 |
| Had taken part in cross-community event | 16 | 39 |
| Currently attends cross-community project | 11 | 54 |
| Protestants | | |
| Not taken part in cross-community event | 30 | 21 |
| Had taken part in cross-community event | 8 | 36 |
| Currently attends cross-community project | 4 (n=1) | 48 |
| No religion | | |
| Not taken part in cross-community event | 21 | 21 |
| Had taken part in cross-community event | 12 | 38 |
| Currently attends cross-community project | 0 | 44 |
| All | | |
| Not taken part in cross-community event | 32 | 18 |
| Had taken part in cross-community event | 12 | 38 |
| Currently attends cross-community project | 7 | 51 |

Respondents who said they were currently involved in cross-community projects were also *most* likely to say they socialised ‘very often’ with people from different religious communities (46% saying ‘very often’), whereas those who had never been involved in a project like this were *most* likely to say they ‘never’ did this (23%). Thirty percent of respondents who were currently involved in cross-community projects outside school said they very often visited friends from other religious communities compared with 22 percent of respondents who had never attended a cross-community project. The difference between these two groups of respondents was similar in relation to friends from other religious backgrounds visiting their homes (33% and 20% respectively saying this happened ‘very often’). Contact by phone or texting with friends from other religious backgrounds was also more intense among those who currently attended cross-community projects (51% saying they rang or texted their friends ‘very often’) than 16 year olds who had never taken part in such projects (41% saying they phoned or texted their friends ‘very often’).

Generally, as Figure 3 shows, 16 year olds attending cross-community projects were much *less* likely than their counterparts to say that they had no friend from the other main religious community (12% and 32% respectively). This relation was statistically significant ($p=0.000$). Those who were currently involved in such projects were least likely to have no friend from the other religious community (7% saying they had none).

Figure 3: Respondents’ friendship patterns by attendance of cross-community projects



As the figure shows, interestingly, the attendance of cross-community projects was also related to the proportion of friends respondents had from other ethnic or racial backgrounds (with respondents who never attended such projects being most likely to say that all their friends were from the same background as they were themselves, $p=0.000$). Less expected was the relation between attending cross-community schemes and the proportion of disabled friends that respondents had, which was also statistically significant ($p=0.000$).

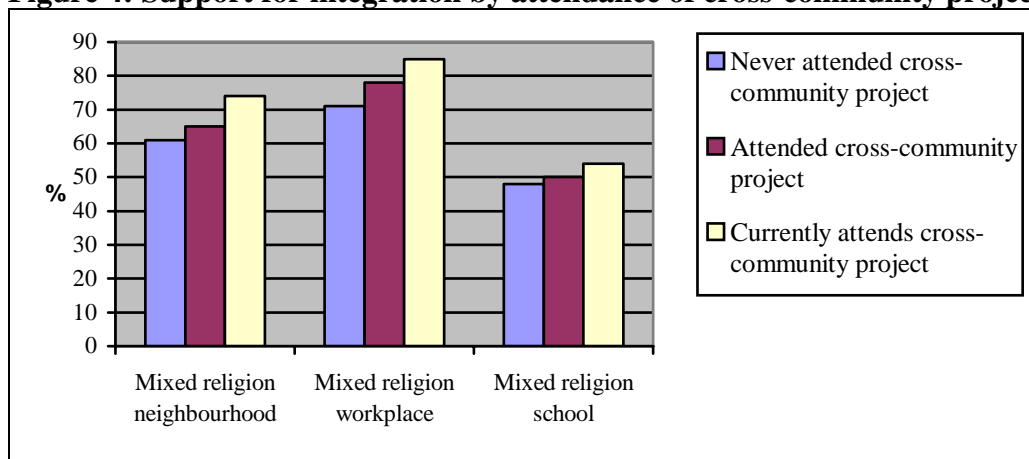
Support for integration

How does participation in cross-community projects relate to respondents' support for integration? YLT asked respondents whether they would prefer to:

- Live in a single religion or mixed religion neighbourhood;
- Work in single religion or mixed religion environment; and
- If they *had* children, prefer to send them to single religion or mixed-religion school.

Figure 4 shows that respondents that were currently involved in cross-community projects were most supportive towards mixed religion environments. It is noticeable that the support for mixed religious schools was significantly lower than for mixed religion workplaces and neighbourhoods. The attendance of cross-community schemes was unrelated to respondents' school type preference.

Figure 4: Support for integration by attendance of cross-community projects



The main factors affecting the choice of mixed religious schooling were:

- Whether a respondent himself or herself had attended a planned integrated or a religiously mixed school (90% and 81% of these respondents respectively favoured mixed religious schooling for their own children); and

- Whether a respondents was Catholic, Protestant or had no religion (Catholics being most likely to favour single-religion schools (52%) and respondents having no religion being most likely to favour mixed religion schools (67%).

The Catholic support for single religion schools is best explained with all-encompassing ethos of Catholic educational upbringing which expects Catholic parents *'to entrust their children to Catholic schools when and where this is possible'* (Gallagher and Worrall 1982, p. 156). *'There is no catechism which can make a school into a Catholic school. It is rather the existence of a Catholic school which can make catechesis possible.'* (qf Laughran 1987, p.116). In consequence, this contributes to separation, which one respondent to the 2007 YLT survey commented like this:

'Community relations will never get better in NI if the two main religions live in different societies and are always apart. As a Catholic I know hardly anything about other religions and I would like this to change.'

In conclusion, the 2007 YLT results reinforced the findings of previous YLT surveys. Young people taking part in cross-community projects outside the school context had more favourable views towards mixing and integration. They were also more likely to have friends from other religious backgrounds to themselves. There can therefore be no doubt that participation in community-based cross-community projects contributes to community cohesion. Catholics were a little more likely to take part in such projects, but as the results of YLT show, they were also more likely than Protestants to express a need for such projects due to their all-encompassing Catholic upbringing, which gave them less opportunity to mix.

Motivation – Findings from the focus groups

In the next section of this report we are going to look in more detail at the motivation of young people to take part in cross-community events and schemes that are not connected to their schools. The findings are mainly based on the data collected through focus group discussions. Data were collected from four projects across Northern Ireland, and we tried to answer the following key questions:

- What is the duration and frequency of meetings in cross-community projects?
- What activities do such projects involve and to what extent are these activities young-people initiated, or at least to what extent young people had *some* say about the content?
- Do young people feel that they as individuals crucially contributed to the success of the project?

Project summaries

These four projects involved in the study were:

1. Culture Crosslinks (Belfast)
2. R.E.A.C.H. Across (Derry/Londonderry)
3. The Ulster Project (Belfast)
4. Voice Project (Armagh City and Keady)

Culture Crosslinks is run by the Youth Initiatives Trust, which aims to mobilise young people to make a vital contribution to their community and to reconciliation in Northern Ireland. According to the mission statement of the organisation:

'The object of Youth Initiatives Trust is to - without discrimination on grounds of age, gender, disability, sexuality, nationality, ethnic origin and political or religious opinion, promote the physical, mental, spiritual and social welfare of young people in Northern Ireland through education, youthwork and volunteering opportunities.'

(www.youthinitiatives.com/Main/statements.htm, accessed April 2008)

The Crosslinks project has been running for ten years and reaches out to youth organisations and young people across Belfast City. It focuses on performing arts and aims to connect the many cultures in Belfast through working together on a performance. The cross-community performing arts group brings together young people from the ages of 14-18 from the Catholic, Protestant and Chinese and Indian communities, working towards a final performance after each 12-week session. They meet on a weekly basis for two-three hours.

R.E.A.C.H. Across is a cross-community project for 14-17 year olds based in the City of Derry. Although based in Derry R.E.A.C.H. has a remit across the Western Education and Library Board (WELB) area from Coleraine to Enniskillen. The sole purpose of this project to increase cross-community contact and integration. R.E.A.C.H. helps to create those opportunities. By using residential-based activities they encourage young people from a range of different schools, religious backgrounds and various youth groups to enjoy a weekend of outdoor, fun activities. After attending residential weekends, additional follow-up activities and training courses are offered to participants. Twice weekly, is open for three hours in the evening for young people to come along and meet. R.E.A.C.H. also receives referrals from the WELB. Apart from fun activities, R.E.A.C.H. Across also supports young people in aspects that are relevant to their education and career, such as writing of application forms and CVs.

The Ulster Project was the longest established cross-community project we investigated. It was set up during the mid-1970s when the Northern Ireland conflict was intense in order to promote reconciliation between Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants. Each year, the Ulster Project offers a mixed religious and gender group of 15-16 year olds the opportunity to travel to America and experience diverse cultures. The young people are matched with American teens from different ethnic backgrounds. They stay in their American host families for one month. During their stay, these young people take part in daily fun activities, but also in community service projects, in social activities and in worship. Community relations issues are directly addressed during an activity called 'Discovery', a weekly session solely to discuss matters that participants felt important in relation to sectarianism in Northern Ireland and racism in the USA. Since 1975, over 6,000 young people from Northern Ireland have participated in the Ulster Project programs. (www.ulsterproject.org/creation.htm, accessed April 2008)

The project describes its purpose and mission in the following way:

- 1. To promote reconciliation between Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants by fostering tolerance, understanding, and friendship among teenage future leaders;**
- 2. To present a program that brings Northern Irish teens of differing Christian faiths together in a strife-free atmosphere that emphasizes acceptance of all people, regardless of creed;**
- 3. To educate and encourage persons, particularly supporters, committee members, and American Host Families, to appreciate their roles as peacemakers and mediators and to understand the purposes of Ulster Project;**

4. To encourage Northern Irish leaders and clergy involved in the program to continue to foster the spirit of Ulster Project among the Northern Irish participants following each program;

5. To promote a spirit of community and commitment among American Ulster Project participants.

(www.ulsterproject.org/mission.htm, accessed April 2008)

The **Voice Project** was initiated by the Armagh Youth Council, Creative Youth Partnership and the Southern Education and Library Board and encompasses a number of local initiatives located in County Armagh. We held focus groups in Armagh and Keady. The Voice Project is led by the Southern Education and Library Board's Youth Council involving 14-19 year olds. The local initiatives linked to the Voice Project are youth-led projects that would not exist without young people's grassroots demand. The main aim of Voice was to bring young people from County Armagh regardless of their backgrounds together to engage in different creative workshops and work towards developing a final creative performance held in the Marketplace Theatre in Armagh. In addition, during the focus group discussions we also collected evidence for other activities that are organised locally by young people, such as charitable events, or visits to other countries.

How young people get involved

Most young people had been encouraged to join their projects through contact with the project staff all of whom had a background in youth work. However, some young people also mentioned that they were encouraged to become involved through family members, friends or past participants who had previously been involved in their projects and had enjoyed this experience. R.E.A.C.H. lobbied proactively for new participants in schools situated in the project's catchment area. Crosslinks also recruits new members, but mainly through youth clubs. The Voice Project, largely relies on grassroots initiatives by young people, whereas participants for the Ulster Project were selected either through an essay competition held in their school or were nominated by their church. The initial activities in all projects were mostly fun-based. The following quotes give evidence for the different motives which encouraged young people to join the cross-community projects:

'I was interested in getting involved as it was something you could actually do, most adults think that teenagers have nothing to do, they go round the streets and stuff but that's not what we want to do, that's what we have to do to get out of the house and having the Youth Council and the *Voice Project* gets us to do something for ourselves.'

For another young person, meeting others was the main motivation:

'I thought it was a great way to meet new people, I'm shy as well, I would never have talked to anyone! I think that it's been really positive for myself generally.'
(Voice Project)

The opportunity to meet other young people from different community backgrounds appealed especially to those who attended single-identity schools and lived in segregated neighbourhoods where opportunities to meet other young people from different backgrounds were limited. One project workers recalled such a incident:

'I can remember a friend of ours who hadn't met a Protestant until he was 18 years old ... and he came along and he was: 'Oh my goodness, I'm staring at Protestants'.

Overall, young people's length of membership in cross-community projects varied greatly, some focus group participants were attending meetings for the first time and others had been involved in their projects for three years or longer. The Ulster Project was different in that the actual start and end dates of the project were clearly defined.

Level of participation

The levels of reported active involvement varied, which confirmed the findings of the 2007 YLT survey reported above. Those who had contributed most developed a sense of pride and ownership about the projects:

'I think that I am just really proud that we now have the knowledge that we can actually do something and give back to the community rather than just sitting down and talking about it and not being much use to anyone, but now I know that we have benefited from it, the whole group.' (Voice Project)

'You feel a part of it whenever you are in a show and stuff...I think you feel more a part of it when there are things to prepare.' (Culture Crosslinks)

Structurally, the projects had made different provisions for the young people to get involved and have some say in what the project was going to do. On the side of the scale, the Voices Project would not exist without the local youth-led grassroots initiatives of young people. Voices was certainly the most youth-led project that we investigated. In the Ulster Project, the participation of young people was, in the first place, concentrated on the production of a concert. This was similar in Crosslinks, but here, some young people were involved in a 'service team' that could be approached when participants were unhappy or if they had particular ideas about activities. Young people in R.E.A.C.H. Across were actively involved in funding activities, but were also represented on a project council which made strategic decisions about future activities.

Cross-community activities

As already indicated above, we found that in many instances people were interested in becoming involved in the projects we investigated primarily because of the fun activities, and the cross-community element was often seen as an aside. We did not find that young people with more liberal views were more likely to be involved, and it is possible that this was the case because of the fun-activity focus that the projects had. Despite of this, there is no doubt that talking about their background and community relations formed part of the experience of participants, but it was not considered an area which created big difficulties. In fact, most participants in the focus groups described this element of their projects as added value. For some young people, the cross-community projects created a safe environment where these issues could be discussed. One young person stated, for example, about religious differences:

‘I’ve only ever talked about it at *Crosslinks*.’

Even though a majority of participants felt that community relations work was not the core activity or main attraction of the projects, there was clear evidence that participation in the projects impacted on young people’s attitudes and views towards other socio-religious groups. One young person explained how R.E.A.C.H. Across had changed their perception of young Protestants:

‘I always thought, no offence like, that Protestants were evil people cos I heard all these stories and I believed them. When I came here, I thought what’s the difference? When I walked in, everyone was friends with me, there’s no difference between Catholics and Protestants, there’s so much conflict and I don’t know why.’

For another young person the participation in Crosslinks built their confidence in addressing community relations issues:

‘You see now I open my heart to other things, I can talk more about things now.’

Interestingly, some participants from the Ulster Project felt that perhaps the right people were not targeted to take part in the Project as the group believed they did not hold very deep set prejudices in the first instance. This was a recurrent view in discussions with people from this Project. Whilst some participants admitted they had grown up in a religiously segregated neighbourhood and went to a single-religion school, and thus had never met a young person from a different background than themselves before they took part in the Ulster Project, others who had grown up in a mixed middle class area expressed the view that the Project should be aimed at individuals who experience sectarianism or live in segregated areas.

Benefits and drawbacks of participation

Focus group participants reported overwhelmingly positive experiences from taking part in their cross-community projects. The benefits ranged from meeting new people and making new friends to enjoying the actual experiences to confidence building and contributions to personal development, as the following quotes shows:

'I wouldn't have gone for head girl and stuff because I know for a fact that I would never have had the confidence to talk in front of people and the Youth Council and the *Voice Project* it has built up my confidence. I would never have went to meetings, I was like real shy.'

'I wouldn't have done the big grand performance if I wasn't in *Crosslinks*, I never used to like doing that kind of thing. I've got a lot more confidence from it. My confidence here has gone sky high.'

In particular the participants in the Ulster Project and the Voice Project reported opportunities to develop greater understanding of other cultures, which confirmed the 2007 YLT survey findings on friendship patterns reported in the previous chapter of this report. One participant in the Voice Project, for example, spoke of a growing friendship with a girl from the Travelling community:

'To tell you the truth I wouldn't have paid any attention to them out in the street, not that I was horrible and stuff but I would have thought they're from there, I mustn't talk to them but like once you get to know them they're my friends now. [...] You get to find out how diverse cultures are. My culture's completely different to theirs. I know that if I wouldn't have talked to them, knocked their door or anything, [...] I wouldn't have felt as confident and like as knowingly to them but now I am.' (Voice Project)

Another benefit reported related to organisational skills and the ability to take on responsibility. One young person in the Voice Project steering group reported:

'We're learning to set things down and stick by it rather than never getting round to doing it because it needs to go as part of the final project and we are actually doing what we are say we are going to do, just go for it instead of sitting round and talking about it.'

The opportunity to make long-lasting friendships was raised by participants in each group, and there was evidence for positive relationships and good friendships that had been established through the projects. When asked if they believed that the projects really made a difference to how people from different backgrounds see each other, one participant in the research project said:

Yeah, I think they do. I don't think I would have been involved in it for so long if I didn't.

However, some participants also reported unpleasant consequences that arose for them through their involvement in the projects. These reached from actual

intimidation from people in the neighbourhood in which the projects took place, to the sometimes substantial time commitment connected to the involvement in a community relations projects, which was the most often mentioned cost, to a lack of support from parents and friends. Some of the Crosslinks participants could recall a number of occasions when local youths threw missiles at transport or loitered maliciously outside the venue in which the cross-community group met. Others were teased or ridiculed for their involvement:

'I wouldn't say that anyone has discouraged me from being involved, but when R.E.A.C.H. called up at my school last week, a boy in my class just laughed at them cos it's just about Protestants and all that there, so at school you feel a bit left out. There's people that think that Catholics shouldn't be getting on with Protestants and all that there.'

Similar to Culture Crosslinks, R.E.A.C.H. participants reported that the actual location of the project led to some drawbacks, in this case an imbalance in participation of young people from different backgrounds:

'Not really enough Protestants go to the actual club cos they're just afraid to walk through the town or go back to people's houses and Protestants from the Waterside are just afraid to come.'

Whilst the majority of young people reported how they made new friends, others talked in the focus groups about general hostility towards their cross-community project and even about losing friends.

'I've lost friends around [a local area], they don't want Catholics'. (Culture Crosslinks)

'I have sacrificed my reputation with my mates' (R.E.A.C.H.)

'You see how many people knocked me out last year from that area who don't go to Crosslinks, calling us 'Fenians.'

'It's a compliment, a Fenian is an Irish warrior.'

'Aye, when it's used in context, it still hurts.'

Figure 5 categorises costs of, and benefits from, attending cross-community projects, as collected in the focus groups and identified by the peer researchers on the data analysis day. Whilst the benefits and costs were not necessarily recognised as opposing ends of a continuum by a single peer researcher, the model below is a useful way of conceptualising how the participation in cross-community projects not only presents advantages but also challenges to the young people across a range of categories. For example, gaining new friends for some participants comes at the price of alienating some other friends who may either feel left behind or may be uncomfortable with being friends or socialising with people from different socio-religious backgrounds. Also, whilst the focus groups showed clearly that young

people participating in cross-community projects gained new skills that were valuable for their further development, three out of our seven peer researchers reported that they sometimes felt that it was difficult to devote the necessary time in order to actively participate in cross-community projects whilst honouring the other commitments they had, such as school and part-time work, other interests and hobbies and family. Finally, whilst young people cherished and valued the opportunity to meet other people that they may not have met elsewhere, there was also an understanding that some of the most popular activities also come at a cost, which then may exclude some people from financially less well-off families who may not be able to afford participation in these activities.

Figure 5: Model of costs and benefits of involvement in cross-community projects

| Cost | | Benefit |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Temporary loss of friends | <i>versus</i> | Making new friends and new experiences |
| Repetitive discussions | <i>versus</i> | New insights |
| Experience of intimidation when getting in the 'wrong crowd' | <i>versus</i> | Prejudice reduction and greater understanding of issues |
| Time commitment | <i>versus</i> | Benefits for own CV, new skills |
| Monetary costs for participating in residential and fun activities | <i>versus</i> | Meeting people that one wouldn't have met otherwise |

Mandate – Findings from one-to-one interviews with leaders of youth projects

The final section in this chapter of the report is based on the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with youth leaders of the cross-community projects involved in this study. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit youth leaders' motives to organise and run community relations schemes and the sources of support of and resistance to such projects in their communities. We have tried to conceptualise this question in the notion of the *mandate* for youth workers, which is an important component of professionalism in the youth work sector (Dingwall and Lewis 1983; Elliot 1972; Freidson 1994, Hughes 1959). We were particularly interested in this question of the mandate of youth workers in relation to the socio-religious segregation of residential areas in which most youth projects operate. What support do youth and community workers have for cross-community initiatives in areas which are very homogeneous in terms of the background of people living there and subsequently the young people attending youth projects?

In a 1999 pamphlet, DENI praised cross-community youth work for its role in peace building:

It is recognised that the Youth Service has historically been the main provider of opportunities for personal and social development for young people and that the changing political landscape will increase the need for such opportunities. Much of what can be achieved in the future will depend on how well young people are prepared for 'active citizenship' and peace building. In developing young people's potential to build a future society, the unique contribution of the Youth Service can not be over estimated. (DENI 1999)

The Youth Service Community Relations Support Scheme was evaluated in 2001 (DENI 2001). DENI reported that 806 programmes with over 41,000 participants had been organised in 1998/99 and 1999/2000. Whilst the Department drew mainly positive conclusions, the views of participating young people, which were published two years later, showed a less favourable picture (O'Connor, Hartop and McCully 2003). Young people criticised that the focus of cross-community schemes remained rather vague and felt that the language used in these programmes was often not young-people friendly. The report therefore concluded that the improvement of cross-community views that could potentially be achieved through institutionalised cross-community schemes remained limited, which confirmed the findings of Buckley and Kenny's study in 1995.

Studies by the Belfast Interface Project (Hall 1998; 2000) the Institute of Conflict Research (2005) and by Jarman and O'Halloran (2000) showed that especially young people living in interface areas identify strongly with their own socio-religious groups and live with a number of spatial, political and social barriers that act as obstacles for

cross-community contact (McGrellis 2005). O'Halloran and McIntyre (1999) gave evidence that even after the Ceasefire young people in interface areas continue to live with paramilitary threats that create contested spaces and foster fears about participation in *community relations* programmes, as for example reported by Healy (2006) and Hansson (2005) who confirmed earlier findings by Hall (1998). This can be seen as evidence that issues of sensitivity in youth work in working class areas found by Gillespie et al. in 1992 remained prevalent after the Ceasefire.

In their 2005-2008 youth work strategy document (DENI 2005), the Department identifies *Peace Building* as one of their seven core values. Six years prior to that, The Community Relations Council (1999) had produced a handbook for youth workers involved in cross-community work. Thus, unquestionably it can be argued that youth workers have the professional statutory mandate to undertake cross-community work, but how was this reflected in the individual interviews and is there evidence for a local mandate for cross-community initiatives from the communities in which youth workers are based?

All of the organisers of the projects involved in this study were experienced youth and community workers with ten or more years of practical youth work experience. Some had been involved in a variety of youth projects both in the statutory and voluntary youth sector. All had a sense of the vulnerability especially of the voluntary youth sector, and one youth worker had actually experienced project closure due to a lack or shortfall of funding.

In the semi-structured interviews we conducted, different themes emerged that were related to youth worker's motivation to be involved in cross-community projects. These themes were:

1. The contribution that cross-community work can make to young people's personal development;
2. The desire to support young people as initiators of youth work;
3. Youth workers' personal experience of the 'Troubles'.

Young people's personal development as motivation

One youth worker³ we interviewed had been working in his project for over ten years. Three years prior to this he was involved in setting this project up on a voluntary basis. Before joining this project he had been engaged in another youth organisation

³ In order to protect the anonymity of our interviewees, we do not talk about individual projects in this section of the report.

which had to close due to the lack of funding. Together with some other volunteers, he felt that there was still a need for its services so he decided to try and offer something to the local young people:

'The previous organisation I worked for had financial problems and it closed and one week later myself and a number of volunteers decided to start another organisation because we knew the young people wanted it and we knew finances. We thought we'll go for this voluntary - we know the young people. The young people met from that. If nobody had turned up at that meeting there would have been no [project].'

This interview passage suggests that the youth worker's perceived mandate to start this cross-community project has two sources: firstly the belief that there was a need and demand among young people for such work, secondly the belief that he together with some other colleagues has the skill to set up and run such a project. The personal investment of this youth worker and his willingness to run a youth programme on a voluntary basis initially, over time, resulted in the formation of an established cross-community project. When asked for the reason why he was engaged in cross-community work, the project leaders explained this further, giving evidence on some of the changes he witnessed among young people attending this project:

'We would see people come in here and have attitudes, they may be disrespectful, they may have personal issues and every leader will tell you to actually see a major change in a personality... I'm not saying that we are eliminating all this stuff but we can inevitably reduce it, make them more employable, and just give them more opportunities, a bit of responsibility... there's nothing better if someone turns round to you and comes back a second year or would like to become an assistant leader and start taking away young people themselves.'

What the youth worker describes in this quote is the personal development of some people within a year of joining this project. One of the main sources of affirmation and motivation for this youth worker is the personal development that young people undergo whilst they attend the scheme. This personal development happens on a scale, ranging from a change in negative attitudes to becoming actively involved in the project themselves and taking on responsibility, for example as an assistant leader or a facilitator of group work. At a later stage in the interview this youth worker talked about the '*great sense of achievement among us leaders who get something out of it as well.*' And he added that if this was lacking youth workers '*wouldn't be here*' in this project. This statement fit very well with findings of research carried out by Harland, Morgan and Muldoon (2005) who found that the relationship between the youth worker and a young person was seen as the central plank of youth work by youth workers.

This case of cross-community work as a vehicle for young people's personal development was strengthened when this youth worker contrasted the benefits of engagement in youth work with possible consequences of the lack of involvement:

'The [other] option is just out there, just sit on the walls and drink on a Friday night, you know, with nobody caring for you [...] One of the biggest problems we had last year in this town was suicide and we just feel that if we can keep young people motivated, keep them sort of friendly with each other, things like that don't play on their minds and don't result in suicidal tendencies. Just to see some of the outcomes is excellent.'

Youth work is thus a way of 'caring for young people' and the interviewee relates the absence of such care to the most severe cases of poor emotional and mental wellbeing, i.e. suicidal ideation. Earlier in the interview this youth worker talked about referrals that their youth project would receive from the local Education and Library Board of young people who are in particular need, which emphasise again the caring element of this youth project.

A youth worker from another project saw this personal development of young people closer related to the actual cross-community element. She said:

'Well cross-community, whatever you want to call it, the new language is 'good relations', part of my work is about inclusion it depends what language you use but I just think that any experiences that is going to be new for anybody, not just young people but adults as well, because adults are very set in their own wee routines and their own wee community.' Any opportunities are going to be good for broadening anybody's thinking.

The view that cross-community work contributes primarily to the broadening of participants' horizons is somewhat closer connected to the view of young people themselves on the benefits of cross-community projects. It is also interesting to see that this youth worker also relates to adults as being set in their own ways and communities, which again reiterates the views of many YLT respondents who expressed the view that adults should be as much targeted with these projects as young people themselves.

Alongside the emancipatory effect of youth work – whether it is attitude formation, attitude change or the facilitation of personal development and maturity – youth workers also talked about the development of a sense of ownership for the project in which the young people were involved. One of the youth workers interviewed saw some of the young people she was working with as 'appointed leaders' but she felt that it was sometimes other participants in the project that 'have begun to shine' and with their enthusiasm for the project 'have started to lead their workshops'. This sense of 'ownership of the project' can be seen as a connection between the theme of 'personal development' and the next theme that emerged in the interviews with the

youth workers, which centred on young people as initiators of cross-community projects.

The desire to support young people as initiators of youth work

We found strong evidence for young people's participation in each project, as reported in the previous section of the report. When asked to what extent young people were directly involved in the running of their projects, all youth leaders reported that some participatory mechanisms were in place that allowed young people to have some say on what was events or activities were being organised. One youth worker put this rather crudely:

'Well at the end of the day there's no point in us organising things that they're not interested in.'

The degree of participation and say that young people had in each project varied according to the character, origin and purpose of their cross-community project. One project in particular was entirely youth-led, and it was in the interview account of the youth worker of this project that we found the strongest evidence for her identification as a facilitator of young people's initiatives. This youth worker had been involved in this project for three years and had previously spent time in other organisations. The main aim of the current project she was involved in was to encourage young people's representation and participation in youth projects in the region. However, in the interview she quite clearly saw this as a process that she can facilitate, but that essentially has to start from the young people themselves:

'We hope they'll get interested in [the project] and that some people will want to join it as well as a result, or have a relationship with [the project] in some way...but we don't know yet. Basically, my impression is that they just want something to do in their own area and we are making it happen and that's short term and I just hope that we can do something else long term.'

Whilst expressing the 'hope' for a long-term development this paragraph shows also the dependence of this youth worker on the young people's initiative. She has an 'impression' of what the young people want, but she is not certain and does not 'know'. At another point in the interview she talks again about the relationship between other adult facilitators – in this case artists - and the young people in the project.

'The young people are influencing how the whole thing is developed, the artists also have an input in terms of they have their own limitations and they have a certain knowledge about producing something that can be presented in the end, so there's a

bit of negotiation between the young people and the adults involved in the whole thing.'

Whilst the artists bring in their expert knowledge, this paragraph can again be seen as evidence for the youth-led approach taken. At another point in the interview the youth worker expresses the view and the hope that the young people will develop an inclusive project with participants from a variety of backgrounds, but again, she concedes that the realisation of this depends on the young people themselves. In this example, it is clear that the mandate for the work that the youth worker undertakes comes from the young people themselves.

Other youth workers did not provide quite as strong empirical evidence with regard to young people's project leadership. However, in the other interviews we also found some text passages that support our view that young people's initiative can be seen as contributing to the mandate of youth workers to organise cross-community projects, as the following example shows:

'Although on a leadership level it's run by adults and it's run by professionally qualified people, I think that a lot of the day to day goings on and the vision for the project and where it's going is very much determined by young people and what they want to see and want to do.'

Young people in this project are consulted on the activities planned and create a dialog between the leaders and young people.

There was evidence in the interviews that youth workers wished that some people were more engaged than they actually were. As one interviewee said, there are natural leaders and others that do not get involved as much as they could:

'I think naturally whenever you look at a group of young people, in that group there are some people who are natural leaders and there are some people who would rather be part of the group and just get on with it.... Some young people say 'Can I do this? Can I help out? What can I do?' and they are looking for responsibility and they are looking for things to get their teeth into.'

However, even in the project run entirely by young people, the youth worker conceded that some young people do not develop as much ownership of the programme as they could.

'A lot of the members are not actually involved once the idea became a reality. It's a shame in some ways they don't feel more ownership because it's a really good piece of work they've done and maybe they don't recognise that, but hopefully they will by the time the big finale happens.'

Youth workers' biographical connection with youth projects and the 'Troubles'

To a certain extent, we feel, this notion of young people's initiative influencing youth work practice is related to some youth workers' own biographical experiences of getting involved in cross-community work. One of the youth workers we interviewed, for example, had been involved in her project for ten years. She reported that she had started as a 14 year old participant herself before becoming assistant leader of this project and eventually returning to the project as a full-time staff member after completing her university education. Undoubtedly, this personal biographical connection and allegiance to the project also acts as a motivator to undertake this work.

In the interviews with two youth workers we also found evidence that their personal experiences of the Northern Ireland conflict acted as a motivator to undertake cross-community work. These two youth workers recalled growing up during the height of the 'Troubles' and the impact this made on their lives. One interviewee felt lucky that he had friendships from both sides of the community at the time. He added that young people are finding it difficult now to extend friendship circles across communities. So he feels compelled to provide an opportunity for them to do this:

'I grew up when the Troubles were going on, I had a lot of Protestant friends and I find it kind of annoying in this town that young people don't have this opportunity. People would see this town as, through the river, being divided and therefore what they are saying is the opportunities aren't there for them to meet. They'd like to have Catholic friends, they'd like to have Protestant friends, you know, there's two maybe integrated schools in this town, the rest are all single identity. And the rest of them seem to be cosy in their own communities and sectors and I just feel that there's young people in this town that want more than that. You know, so that's what I get out of it [the cross-community work].'

The other youth worker reported that in the location she grew up in school and leisure activities were single-identity based and it wasn't until she was 16 years of age that she began to become into contact with mixed religion and gender groups. It was this experience that stimulated her interest in other cultures and her youth work training and career provided the opportunity to explore these issues further:

'When I became a full-time youth worker I was quite active in trying to meet other people from different backgrounds because I trained with students from throughout Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. I was kind of interested in meeting different people from different backgrounds and I suppose there was a lot of talk about community relations work at the time.'

One of the first projects she worked on was a cross-community gig involving local churches and young musicians. She discovered that arts-based activities could bring people together.

'I just find that the arts is a great way of bringing people together in a common interest and then discovering differences around that.'

This youth worker also feels that her personal circumstances of living in a mixed marriage made an impact on her outlook and may have added to her *'interest in just getting involved with everybody'*.

The personal experiences of growing up in a segregated society then influenced the youth workers views on the benefits of cross-community projects. The key theme here was the creation of opportunities to meet and socialise with people of different backgrounds. In particular in small close-knit rural communities where young people mainly attend single-sex and single-identity schools,

'[...] this is giving them opportunities to mix socially that they possibly wouldn't have otherwise at the age they are at.'

Whilst, as we have seen above, in larger urban settings creating such opportunities to meet often involves the encouragement to cross perceived boundaries, in more rural areas, cross-community activities also face practical difficulties, such as transport:

'The young people who have got involved it was more a case of nothing to do in their own area so they were just glad to be involved in something and I suppose those young people are coming together with other young people they wouldn't normally meet because we are able to provide transport.'

Offering safe transport provides the young people and their parents with assurances that are vital for the opportunity to engage in cross-community activities:

'We're also using venues that normally some young people wouldn't normally be in e.g. bringing young Catholics to the Methodist hall, and maybe because of the way that we are doing it feels more positive and safe for people.'

However, there are substantial costs involved in this which may have implications for the sustainability of projects like this, as the youth worker reports.

For the youth workers we interviewed, cross-community work encompassed more than just bringing together young Catholics and Protestants. We found evidence that young people 'from the margins' was one of the perceived target groups. Above we already gave evidence that caring for vulnerable young people (including those with suicidal ideation) was seen as one of the main aims of the youth work by one of the interviewees. Another youth worker confirmed this all-inclusive approach in her interview:

'[Our project] is really good for getting those people on the margins of groups and making them feel included and because you are trying to create an atmosphere where you are inclusive and where it doesn't matter if you're this way or that way'

we're learning how to accept each other and how to facilitate each other and how to actually engage with each other.'

And again, similar to the results of the 2007 YLT survey and the focus group discussions, we found further evidence here that youth workers notice an attitude change in those who attend cross-community schemes. As already stated above, they find this rewarding and encouraging and this attitude change contributes to the youth workers' motivation to undertake such work:

'There's that natural hatred it's just part of their everyday life and for those guys you suddenly come along and [see] 'he's not what I imagined' or 'he's dead on, he's fine'. So for those who have been brought up like that, I think it really helps.'

Support in the community – community mandate

One of the objectives of this research project was to establish to what extent youth and community workers' motivation to run community relations schemes was based on a mandate from the local communities in which the projects are based. We therefore asked in the interviews how local communities supported the work that is being undertaken by the projects.

One interviewee reported that local parents had been supportive to their project and had been active in facilitating local groups:

'We've got some brave volunteers who are helping us to facilitate in some of the areas where we would find it tricky enough to provide and it is good local facilitation because that's the other thing, there's no point in me going out and running something for 6 months then walking away and leaving them. We're trying to use people in the community as well.'

Another project reported positive links with other local youth and community initiatives. One project tried to recruit new participants through local schools and found some very supportive but others less so:

'Some schools are superb, we walk into them and there's big interest, good feedback and a number of applications and there's other schools that we might spend 40 phone calls trying to get one answer. It can be very frustrating because ideally we would like a cross-community balance and gender and every category and practically that's not always possible.'

However, some projects also faced overt difficulties and found it hard to find suitable venues in accepting neighbourhoods.

'We really struggled to get a venue and we have ended up in a Catholic girls' school and for some people because of their gender and their religion that's been a new experience. All participants were consulted along the way and we checked out a lot of different venues and they were quite happy with it, but at the same time myself and others like the artist were very particular about coming here and meeting the

young people here and bringing them to the venue first. Any night [we meet] to take them up and that made them feel safer.'

Participants in this project were also openly attacked in a venue that was located in a single-religion working class neighbourhood:

'We've had potatoes thrown at us and stones thrown at the buses, we've had young people from around the area that know that Chinese guys and Catholic guys are in the facility, you know, banging on the doors, they've scraped 'get out all taigs' on the back doors of the church.'

This youth worker also reported incidences where their cars had been damaged and where the police had to be alerted on occasions when sectarian disruptions occurred. Incidents like this of course threaten the existence of such cross-community activities and the youth worker reported in the interview that some parents had expressed concerns over their children travelling to these venues if sectarian attacks had occurred.

As the examples show, the picture in relation to community support and mandate for cross-community projects is mixed. Depending on the location where activities take place and the perceived affiliation of participants, projects attract local support, resentment or even hostility. What the interviews show is that youth workers see the benefits for the participants in the projects and therefore see those individual young people as their clients and not necessarily the community from which they come, even though they talked empathetically about those who they do not reach for whatever reason this may be – monetary, practically or socially.

Concluding Summary

We set out to explore in-depth young people's experiences of, and attitudes towards, cross-community projects. We were very specific about the fact that the projects we were interested in had to be community-based rather than school-based because we wanted to be certain that the young people we were asking about their experiences of attending these projects were entirely taking part by choice and their own free will.

We used a mixed-methods approach to explore:

1. Young peoples experience of participating in cross-community schemes;
2. Their motivation to participate in cross-community projects;
3. Youth and community group leaders' mandate to organise and run such schemes.

Participation and experience

The results from the questions placed in the 2007 YLT survey showed that the vast majority of young people who had taken part in community-based cross-community projects experienced these projects as positive events. Their attitudes towards cross-community projects were favourable, although we also found evidence for an element of scepticism in relation to the scope of these projects and the long term outcome they can realistically achieve in the improvement of cross-community relations in Northern Ireland. It was interesting to find that seven out of ten YLT respondents agreed that minority ethnic groups are now the main target group for the sectarian hatred. This would indicate that there is a sense among 16 year olds that more educational work has to be undertaken to assure that migrant workers and people from minority ethnic backgrounds will be treated as valued and integral members of Northern Ireland society. This is an area that Young Life and Times will also explore further and in more depth in the 2008 survey and in a follow-up project undertaken together with the National Children's Bureau, again with the help of peer researchers.

In relation to the access to community relations projects we did not find an urban-rural divide as might have been expected. Rather we found that young Catholics were more likely than any other group of young people to say that they did not have the opportunities to mix. However, similar to other projects we also found that young Catholics were somewhat more likely to take part cross-community projects. Over the past few years, an informal debate about why this may be has been taken place among organisations involved in cross-community projects. Attempts to explain this phenomenon have been manifold and include references to issues such as the effects

that the Northern Ireland Peace Process has had on the Protestant/Loyalist and Catholic/Nationalist communities; quasi-religious and socio-psychological attempts to hypothesise about a Catholic or Protestant psyche in relation to community cohesion and activism; as well as efforts to incorporate notions of Reformation-based Protestant individualism versus ultra-montane Catholicism into these hypotheses.

We have not explored this issue in enough depth to verify or falsify such theories. However, in our project we found evidence that for some young Catholics an all-encompassing Catholic upbringing causes an almost complete separation from non-Catholics, due to the residential and educational segregation they experience when they grow up. This ultimately leads to fewer opportunities to mix, which was evident in our findings presented in the first results section of this report. Whilst some young Protestants have similar experiences of de-facto segregation in their schools, it is the rationale of Catholic education (Laughran 1987) which puts an additional pressure on Catholic families and ultimately contributes to the distinct sense of separation that became evident in our research findings – both quantitative and qualitative. Perhaps, above all, it is this lack of opportunity for young Catholics that leads to a greater desire to attend cross-community projects.

Whilst issues like parity and power relations in cross-community need to be taken into consideration, maybe it is also time to be a little bit more relaxed about uneven numbers of Protestants and Catholics attending such schemes. After all the schemes are meeting a demand, and our findings clearly suggest that currently the demand among young Catholics is higher than among any other group of young people. As well as that, we found that *both* Catholics and Protestants report positive experiences from attending cross-community projects. Looking at cross-community friendship patterns, Table 5 in the first results section of this report gave evidence that Catholics benefitted most from attending cross-community projects. However whilst attendance of these projects was significantly related to the number of cross-community friendships reported by both Protestants ($p=0.037$) and Catholics ($p=0.000$), there was no statistical difference between Catholics and Protestants ($p=0.178$) in terms of the number of cross-community friends they had. Again, this would suggest that the way these projects are set up at the moment benefit all Participants regardless of their socio-religious background.

Motivation, costs and benefits

In the in-depth explorative part of this research project we collected evidence from young people on their motivation to take part in cross-community projects and from youth and community group leaders and mandate to organise such schemes. Our findings showed that there is a multitude of reasons why young people attend cross-community schemes, which range from boredom to their willingness to make a difference to their community. Most young people attended because they had specific interests, such as the participation in arts-based or fun activities. The encouragement to do so came from an equally broad range of sources, including friends, teachers, clergy, past participants in projects or family members. For almost all young people we talked to, the cross-community aspect of the projects they were involved in was an add-on rather than the initial incentive to take part. Again, learning is possible from this.

Criticism has been voiced in the past about the 'Mikey-Mouse-trip approach' to community relations work, in particular in school-based projects, where organisers failed altogether to address community-relations issues or projected these to scenarios that were distant from real-life situations in Northern Ireland. What we learned in this project is that in community settings fun activities and arts-based activities can form a framework in which projects can be established that attract young people from a range of backgrounds. These activities can contribute to the relationship building among young people, and it is on this basis that active community-relations work appears to function best. As one of the youth workers interviewed put it:

'At the end of the day there's no point in us organising things that they're not interested in.'

Young people described a number of costs and benefits to their participation in these schemes which we presented in a model in Figure 5 of this report. These were as manifold as the incentives to participate in these projects in the first place. What the model shows is that whilst the benefits are overwhelming in terms of young people's personal development, their maturity and the open-mindedness, even ten years after the Peace Process was institutionalised through the Good Friday Agreement, participation in cross-community projects remains also challenging, risky and costly for some young people.

Mandate and motivation of youth workers

The youth workers' accounts showed clearly that their practice is predominantly informed by the perceived need of the young people attending their projects. Above all, the young people are seen as the clients and it is their needs that give the youth

workers the motivation and the mandate to carry on with organising cross-community initiatives. Our interviews showed that some youth workers were willing to take personal risks in undertaking this work. Contributing factors for their initiative were personal experiences of growing up at times when the Northern Ireland conflict was intense and their close personal affiliation with particular projects in which they themselves had been participating as a young person. In relation to the community mandate we found a less cohesive picture, suggesting that the support for the projects exists in some parts of the community, but sectarian hostility and territorialism also continue to adversely affect some of the work that is being undertaken.

Involving peer researchers

Employing peer researchers for the second and explorative part of this project was a useful methodology considering the area of investigation and the time constraints on this research project. Both members of the adult research team had worked with peer researchers in the past and experience and learning drawn from other projects enabled the team to work quickly and effectively and helped to plan and manage the peer researcher relationship successfully. On reflection, training could have been more comprehensive however the time constraints on the project would have limited the potential for this.

As discovered in other projects (Elliott et al.; 2001; Kilpatrick et al.; 2007), the quality of the data could have been better, but this was mainly due to lack of experience of the young interviewers which sometimes led to less probity when questioning participants. By observing each focus group and interview, the adult research team took additional fieldwork notes and suggested additional questions which helped to augment the data.

Undoubtedly the research team benefited from a youth perspective, gaining access to existing groups and harnessing connections of language, rapport and friendships which helped to explore the issues under investigation. The peer researchers have also gained much from their involvement, new insights into social research, new skills and confidence. Our team of young people were enthusiastic and want to make a difference and these kinds of projects help to fulfil these aspirations and can encourage social action.

In conclusion of this project, we feel that we have been able to show the ongoing need of cross-community projects to take place in a changing Northern Irish society.

However, under the undoubtedly more peaceful surface, strong sectarian views continue to exist and threaten to remain unchallenged if complacency sets in with the achievements of the past few years. We were also able to collect more evidence that the concept of cross-community work has to be extended beyond the traditional Northern Irish focus of Catholic-Protestant relations to include migrant workers and minority ethnic communities.

The final quote in this report comes from one of the youth worker interviewed in this project and it adequately represents this insight that the improvement of cross-community relations remains an unfinished business:

'I just think with the lack of money, with the money now being pulled out of Northern Ireland, it's just a real shame, it seems like there has been so much stuff started, foundations being laid and the governments just think 'oh sure that's fine now, that's ok', but actually we are just scraping the surface, we do community relations sessions and do you know what? There are some serious under the surface anger, bigotry; or suddenly it's like you're their friends, but you can't have a girlfriend or boyfriend and I think that there's so much work still to be done that it's a real shame that so many cross-community projects are going to have to close down cos I've seen the benefits of them.'

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